

FOR A FAIR RECOVERY

NÍOS FEARR LE SÍNN FÉIN

Sinn Féin

Sinn Féin Manifesto

General Election 2016

Introduction

A Chara,

2016 is a huge year for the people of Ireland, marking the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising. The Proclamation of the Irish Republic commits to pursuing the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all of its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally. At its core is a belief that all people are equal and all nations are sovereign.

That historic document is a clear statement of intent for an all-Ireland Republic built on the foundations of civil and religious liberty, social justice and equality for all citizens. It remains the mission statement of modern Irish republicanism and its principles guide us today.

Sinn Féin believes that citizens have fundamental rights which are the responsibility of government to deliver – the right to a home; the right to decent healthcare; the right to education; the right to security; the right to equality no matter where you are born or what your background, your beliefs or your sexuality; the right of people with a disability to play a full and independent role in all aspects of life; the right of young people to live and work in their own country; the right of Irish language speakers to use the language in every aspect of their daily lives; and the right to the re-unification of Ireland.

Fine Gael and Labour tell us that a recovery is underway. If it is, it isn't a fair recovery. It is a two-tier recovery that benefits them and their friends at the top, not the majority of hard-working Irish people.

Instead of delivering on their promise of a democratic revolution, decision after decision taken by this government has caused chaos in the lives of hundreds of thousands of families across the State. It is clear that Fine Gael and Labour have no solutions to the crises they have caused in housing and health and it is significant that when Fine Gael moved from their 5-point-plan to a 3-step-plan, they dropped healthcare entirely.

Enda Kenny now wants to return to the reckless boom and bust policies of Fianna Fáil. He wants to bring in tax cuts that benefit the wealthiest and ensure the continuation of chaos for everyone else.

Sinn Féin has a very different vision for Ireland.

Sinn Féin has a plan for a fair recovery that will grow the economy and secure the recovery for the average family. That is why our first priority in government will be to abolish water charges and the property tax and take more than a quarter of a million people out of the USC. We will increase employment and support enterprises.

Sinn Féin has a plan for healthcare that is based on the fundamental belief that inability to pay should not deny access, nor the opportunity to lead a full, long, and healthy life.

The health system is failing people every day because it is a grossly inequitable two-tier, public-private system. The privatisation of health by Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour has meant that today there is almost no aspect of our health system that is universal. Irish people are now paying more and getting less.

In order to deliver universal healthcare we need to increase capacity in the system and progressively replace private spending by members of the public with public spending.

Over the lifetime of the next government we have set out a year-on-year plan to move from a two-tier public-private system towards universal healthcare, free at the point of delivery and where access is based on need alone.

We have a plan for housing. The current crisis in housing did not happen by accident. It happened because Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour took the decision to end the State's direct responsibility for meeting housing needs. They handed housing policy over to private developers, banks and private landlords. This policy has been a costly disaster.

They refused to invest in social and affordable housing and there are now officially 90,000 households on local authority waiting lists. They refused to deal with soaring rents in the private sector and caused rents to increase faster in 2015 than at any time during the boom.

Sinn Féin believes that one of the fundamental rights in any society is the right to a home and that is why we are committed to building 100,000 social and affordable homes.

For the first time since the foundation of this State, there is an opportunity to elect a progressive government and Sinn Féin wants to lead that government. This manifesto sets out the detail of what we want to deliver and it builds on the foundations set out in our yearly budget alternatives and our detailed plans on health, housing, childcare, rural Ireland and the economics of Irish unity.

- Sinn Féin has a plan to build 100,000 homes, guarantee rent certainty and security and tackle the banks on unfair mortgage interest rates.
- Sinn Féin has a plan to move from a dysfunctional two-tier health system to universal healthcare.
- Sinn Féin has a plan to create 250,000 jobs and to ensure that workers are fairly paid with secure conditions.
- Sinn Féin has a plan for a fair recovery that will ease the burden on the average family: we will abolish water charges and the property tax, take a quarter of a million people out of the USC, and make the cost of living cheaper.
- Sinn Féin has a plan for Irish re-unification.



Is mise,

Gerry Adams

Executive summary of measures

Better for Ireland

A united Ireland, recognising our culture & heritage

- We will campaign for an island-wide referendum on Irish unity.
- We will introduce a Green Paper on Irish unity.
- We will ensure a senior cabinet minister has responsibility for Gaeltacht Affairs and the Irish Language and establish a permanent Joint Oireachtas Committee for Gaeltacht Affairs and the Irish language.
- We will protect and restore the entire Moore Street terrace 10-25 as the site of the last act of the 1916 Easter Rising.
- Challenge the British Government to live up to their responsibilities to the peace process on legacy issues and dealing with the past.

Equality & human rights

- We will end Direct Provision and replace it with a not-for-profit model with integration and human rights best practice at its core.
- We will significantly increase funding to domestic violence support organisations and refuges.
- We will recognise the ethnicity status of the Travelling community, including their right to traveller specific accommodation.
- We will develop a working group tasked with examining what has worked best in terms of supporting survivors of wrongs or injuries for which the State is accountable.

Ireland's international role

- We will formally recognise the State of Palestine.
- We will hold a referendum on inserting neutrality into Bunreacht na hÉireann.
- We will increase funding for ODA and bring forward a targeted plan to ensure that Ireland reaches its commitments on Overseas Development Aid (ODA).

Ending corruption

- We will confront corruption and cronyism and overhaul appointments to State boards.
- Where tribunals make findings against individuals and produce comprehensive reports, we will ensure the State acts on those findings within the Statute of Limitations available for criminal prosecutions.
- We will conduct an independent audit of the State's oversight agencies to combat white-collar crime.

Accountability in politics

- We will introduce a partial list system, electing one third of the Dáil from party lists and the remainder from seven-seat constituencies so that election results more accurately reflect actual voter preference.
- We will hold a referendum to reduce the voting age and extend voting rights to citizens in the North and to the Diaspora.
- We will ensure that the Seanad becomes a fully inclusive, representative and accountable institution.

For a Fair Recovery

Investing in job creation

- We will help to create 250,000 additional jobs over the next five years, through both State and private job creation.
- We will open up public procurement to small businesses.
- We will abolish upward-only rents.

Bringing fairness to the tax system

- We will abolish the Local Property Tax, saving 1.8 million homeowners an average of €244 per year.
- We will scrap Water Charges, saving a family of two adults €260 per year.
- We will make the tax system progressive by removing workers earning under €19,572 from the USC net, benefiting 277,000 employees.
- We will ease the tax burden on the self-employed, moving towards the equalisation of the Self-Employed Tax Credit with the PAYE Tax Credit.

All-Ireland economy

- We will have a planned approach to economic development across the island of Ireland, including one tax system and one currency.
- We will create a Border Economic Development Zone to harmonise trade and maximise returns for border businesses.
- We are committed to the A5 funding package as set out in the Fresh Start Agreement and to ensuring the Narrow Water Bridge project is completed.

A better deal for workers

- We will increase the National Minimum Wage to €9.65 an hour and we will make the public sector a Living Wage employer.
- We will amend industrial relations legislation to provide for mandatory trade union recognition and collective bargaining rights.
- We will tackle the uncertainty created by insecure and low hour contracts by introducing legislation that provides for fair hours contracts.

Taxing wealth

- We will improve tax equality and increase the tax take, increasing the rates of Capital Acquisition Tax and Capital Gains Tax for passive investments that don't help the real economy and examine the introduction of a Wealth Tax.
- We will ask the top 6% of earners to pay an additional 7 cent out of every euro earned on income over €100,000. This new band would be applied on an individual basis and not on the joint income of a couple.

The political system -- leading from the front

- We will reduce TDs' salaries to €75,000 and Senators' salaries to €60,000.
- We will reduce the salary top-ups of An Taoiseach and Ministers by 50%.
- We will reduce excessive pension payments to former Taoisigh, Ministers and top civil servants.
- We will cap the pay of special advisors to the Taoiseach and Ministers at €75,000.

A proper banking system

- We will not be rushed into the sale of any State asset. The decision to sell any stake in Permanent TSB, Bank of Ireland or AIB must be based on the best interests of the Irish people in the long term.
- We will immediately carry out a review of Credit Union regulations and look at lending restrictions, savings caps and restrictions on the types of investments and services Credit Unions can offer, including what more the sector can do to help develop small businesses.

Getting a better deal in debt negotiations

- We will reopen negotiations at European Union level on the State's legacy banking debt, including preventing the sale of the promissory note bonds currently held at the Central Bank.
- We will apply for retrospective recapitalisation of AIB and Bank of Ireland through the European Stability Mechanism.

Our plan for public services and quality of life

Healthcare that works

- We will increase spending on healthcare by €3.3 billion to move from a failing, two-tier health system towards universal healthcare.
- We will roll out free GP care at a rate of almost a quarter of a million more people each year and make prescription drugs free for everyone.
- We will end two-tier access to hospital care, reduce waiting times and deal with the trolley crisis.
- We will recruit 6,600 additional frontline health workers, including consultants, nurses, midwives, dentists and allied health professionals.
- We will increase the mental health care budget in year one by €35 million.
- We will award an automatic medical card to every child with a serious illness or disability and tackle the poverty trap by introducing a new secure medical card for adults with disabilities, based on medical need.
- We will abolish the €100 charge for the use of Emergency Departments and the €75 per day charge for inpatient care.
- We will invest in our ambulance services.
- We will support older people by increasing home help hours, respite hours and by providing additional nursing home beds.
- We will hold a referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment.
- We will increase funding to the Public Dental Service.

Building more houses

- We will launch plans for 2030 - Project 100,000 to bring State ownership of housing stock to a minimum of 200,000. This will ensure a build of at least 70,000 social units and at least 30,000 cost purchase and cost rental housing units by 2030.
- We will commit €5 billion (A cumulative €2.2 billion more than the government's commitment) in capital spending in 2016-2021 and strengthen Part V to ensure the delivery of 36,500 social and affordable houses.
- We will review all property-related tax reliefs that encourage speculation for profit.
- We will re-examine urgently the practice of capping rent subsidies – simultaneous to the introduction of rent regulations, to ensure rents demanded by landlords do not escalate to meet any increase in the rent cap.
- We will create rent certainty by linking rent increases to inflation.

- We will make an additional €30 million available to local authorities and homelessness agencies in year one of government to house the homeless in emergency accommodation.
- We will empower the Central Bank to set caps on mortgage interest rates chargeable by banks.

Ensuring community safety and justice

- We will recruit 3,000 gardaí over our government term to restore An Garda Síochána force levels to 14,250.
- We will reverse the closures of garda stations.
- We will empower the Policing Authority to oversee the implementation of recommendations from Garda Inspectorate reports.
- We will introduce a Sentencing Council that issues sentencing guidelines to the judiciary to ensure accountability and consistency in sentencing.
- We will integrate restorative justice processes into the existing criminal justice system.

Equality in education

- We will reduce class sizes and gradually reduce the ratio of pupils to teachers from 27:1 to 20:1, beginning with one point in year one and a further point in year two.
- We will increase the capitation rates for primary and secondary schools by 10% over the term of the government and for Youthreach, VTOS and PLCs by 5%.
- We will defend small schools by reversing changes to the staffing schedule for schools with less than 85 pupils.
- We will reverse the cuts to guidance counselling and ensure at least one guidance counsellor per 500 pupils ex-quota.
- We will end the laws that allow for religious discrimination against children in school admissions and we will support increased diversification of patronage.
- We will abolish student fees over a term of government by incrementally reducing the student contribution.
- We will place on a statutory footing school guidelines on anti-bullying and addressing diversity as well as guidelines on mental health and suicide awareness policies.

Prioritising children and childcare

- We will extend maternity benefit by 6 weeks in year one, bringing it to 52 weeks over the lifetime of government, and increase the rate of maternity benefit to €260 per week.
- We will cap maximum fees for childcare costs at €180 per week in year one and move to €150 per week (€3.75 per hour) over the term of government.

- We will work towards a 60% degree-led ECCE workforce by 2025 as recommended by the EU, i.e. that 60% of all supervisors, managers, etc, hold degrees.
- We will provide an additional 1,000 SNAs.
- We will increase capitation grants for the Free Pre-School Year by €5 per week to €67.50, and by €9.50 for the higher capitation rate to €82.50.

Protecting our environment

- We will introduce a full legislative ban on fracking.
- We will bring the Sinn Féin Wind Turbine Regulation Bill 2014 to committee and remaining stages and introduce proper regulation of wind turbines.
- We will bring in staged tax measures on offshore oil and gas fields, as outlined in the report by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Natural Resources and Agriculture.
- We will engage with climate change experts to set specific targets and create a roadmap to reduce CO2 emissions.

Building flood defences

- We will regulate planning to prevent areas at risk of flooding being built on or developed and we will invest in flood defences.
- We will ensure that affordable, capped insurance cover is provided to domestic households and SME properties against high flood risk.
- We will establish a single Shannon River Authority to ensure that there is proper coordination and a robust response from the various agencies responsible when flooding occurs and also that necessary steps are taken to minimise the risk of flooding in the future.

Tackling barriers for people with disabilities

- We will give An Taoiseach specific responsibility for Disability Inclusion and for driving the cross-departmental National Disability Strategy Implementation Plans.
- We will extend an automatic full medical card to every child qualifying for the Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) and introduce a secure medical card for people with disabilities, immune from changes to household finances or employment status.
- We will tackle further barriers to employment for people with disabilities.
- We will deliver further on the EPSEN Act 2004, prioritising entitlement to an Individual Education Plan with associated resources for every child with a disability.

- We will make funding such as the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with Disabilities payable to voluntary housing agencies and private landlords who are willing to adapt to the requirements of a long-term tenant.
- We will fully integrate supported housing for people with intellectual disabilities and for people who experience mental illness in the community, and increase support for sheltered accommodation schemes.
- We will introduce a scheme to refund VRT/VAT for taxi drivers who purchase a wheelchair-accessible vehicle with a clawback provision should they cease to operate within a certain timeframe.
- We will roll out a major infrastructure programme to make all public transport services fully wheelchair accessible.

A new deal for rural Ireland

Addressing the imbalance

- We will introduce a Rural Equality Bill to provide for carrying out rural impact assessments where measures affect rural areas.
- We will develop a new enterprise spatial strategy to orientate infrastructural development and IDA and Enterprise Ireland development in a balanced regional manner.
- We are committed to keeping open post offices, libraries, garda stations and other services that connect people with their local towns.
- We will make up the shortfall in cuts to the Leader funding at EU level.
- We will strive to ensure all householders and businesses have access to a minimum broadband speed of 100 Mbps.
- We will introduce a pilot scheme for rural resettlement. This will provide a relocation package of up €5,000, including return flights for qualifying emigrant families to return to rural Ireland.
- We will increase funding for the rural transport programme and provide a funding package for improving the condition of rural roads.
- We will restore funding to local authorities for the LIS community involvement scheme for non-council roads.
- We will ensure the retention of domestic turbary rights for families in the West of Ireland who cut turf to heat the family home, as has been part of Irish tradition and heritage for centuries.

A good deal for fishing and coastal communities

- We will repeal the current penalty point system that criminalises fishermen and devalues their business.
- We will fight for an adequate quotas and ensure their fairer distribution amongst Irish fishermen.
- We will oppose further cuts to the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, which exists to give financial assistance to coastal communities and the fishing industry.
- We will pursue at a European level restrictions on factory vessels and super-trawlers in Irish waters.
- We will negotiate a reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and related legislation to simplify regulations and put an added emphasis on development in coastal communities.

Fairness for farmers

- We will implement the Charter of Rights for Farmers so that direct payments and farm schemes can be delivered to farmers efficiently and speedily.
- We will establish a €12 million compensation fund for Hen Harrier designated conservation lands.
- We will maintain the concept of income averaging for taxation purposes to compensate farmers for extreme income volatility.
- We will work for the simplification of the Beef Data Genomics Programme to encourage wider uptake.
- We will publish clear guidelines for farmers applying for Areas of Natural Constraint payments to avoid the lengthy waiting period thousands of farmers endured in 2015.
- We will continue to oppose the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).
- We will establish an all-island agri-food label for Irish produce.
- We will reintroduce the Groceries Order with immediate effect to combat below-cost selling of products to ensure fair prices for producers.
- We will restore €5 million of Farm Assist and create an additional 500 places on the Rural Social Scheme, expanding the current number of scheme places by 20%.

Five years of Fine Gael and Labour chaos and broken promises

Chaos in Health

- 601 patients on trolleys on one day alone.
- 4,154 fewer nurses in the public health system.
- 68,824 patients waiting for inpatient treatment.
- 385,507 patients waiting for a hospital outpatient appointment.
- 20% of people with absolutely no medical cover.
- €159 million cut from the budget for disability services.
- Only one in three cases, classified as serious, reached within the target time by the National Ambulance Service.

Chaos in Housing

- 1,500 - the number of children sleeping in emergency accommodation every night.
- 89,872 - the number of households on Local Authority waiting lists.
- 92,291 - family homes in mortgage arrears in the 3rd quarter of 2015.
- €1,358 - the average monthly rent in Dublin, with people paying on average over €1,000 in the rest of the State.
- 1.8 million - the number of households paying an average of €244 a year in property taxes.
- €2,000 - what a 1% reduction would save on average in annual interest payments for a family with a €200,000 mortgage if the government had taken action on interest rates.
- €340 million - the subsidy paid by the State per annum to private landlords to house rent supplement recipients.

Chaos in Families

- 200,000 - the number of young people who have emigrated since 2010.
- 1.5 million – the number of home-help hours slashed.
- €120 - the annual amount cut from the fuel allowance for the elderly and most vulnerable.
- €36.80 - the amount slashed from the weekly invalidity pension for 65-year-olds.
- €4,000 - the annual amount of money saved per garda station closed by this government. They shut down 139 stations.
- €800 to €1,100 - the monthly cost of childcare for one child.

And through it all, they protected the Golden Circle

- €156,380 - how much Enda Kenny pays his special advisors, breaching his own pay caps.
- €12,000 - how much the Taoiseach will pocket through the abolition of the USC.
- 250 - the number of individuals who saw their wealth increase by 16% to €75 billion in 2015.
- €11 million - how much NAMA spent in wages for property developers in one year. Fifteen were paid between €150,000 to €199,000 per year.

**FINE GAEL FIGURES
DON'T ADD UP**

MORE CHAOS IN HEALTH AND HOUSING

For a Fair Recovery vótáil Sinn Féin

Better with
Sinn Féin
Níos fearr le Sinn Féin

Balance sheet

We have undergone a rigorous costing exercise with the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform over the past number of months to cost this document. The first of the following two balance sheets outlines the confirmed budget room (fiscal space) available over the five-year government term, the additional discretionary revenue we would raise and our overall spend. The second balance sheet gives the combined current and capital spends in key departments.

In undertaking this work, we were conscious of the need to be prudent and not promise people what cannot be delivered. Over the last few months, the government has caused uncertainty by announcing different numbers on fiscal space and targets. We

are allowing in our balance sheets for 2017-2021 both contingency current spending and capital spending budgets. The budget room available over the next five years will be determined by economic growth and stability, something only Sinn Féin can provide.

We have not included the possible additional €1 billion – €1.5 billion that may be available in 2019 due to the Commission's revision of the medium term objectives. It is just not possible for any political party to predict all future expenditure pressures or fluctuations in growth, so we are treating this money as a contingency fund and it is our intention to allocate 1 billion in capital investment from it.

Balance sheet 2017-2021 € million	
Fiscal space	€8,600
Net Tax	€1,715.35
Savings in public spending	€366.65
Total spend available	€10,682
Current expenditure	-€6,356.43
Capital expenditure	-€3,100.1
Unallocated capital/current expenditure	-€1,225.47
Total expenditure	-€10,682
Balance	€0

Headline current and capital* spending	
Health	-€3,300
Housing	-€2,278
Education	-€1,923
Social Protection	-€912
Childcare	-€858
Justice	-€420
Water infrastructure	-€900
Transport infrastructure	-€1,600

(*Capital spend for 2017-2021 is €3.1bn, which equates to a cumulative capital spend off €7,390m)

CASE STUDIES

Married couple with two children, two PAYE workers

Better off with Sinn Féin by between €504 and €5,664 per year

John and Áine are married and live in Donegal. John works as a forklift driver, earning €40,000 per year and Áine works in a nursing home, earning €20,000 per year. They have two children: Seán, aged 19 and Sarah, aged 13.

Fixed benefits

- Abolition of the Property Tax: €244 (on average)
- Abolition of Water Charges: €260

Possible benefits

- If Seán is enrolled in third-level education, the family will benefit from the phased abolition of the €3,000 student contribution charge.
- The family may save from the extension of direct provision of orthodontic treatment by up to €2,100.
- Free GP care, starting with those on lower incomes, could save them €60 every time they visit their doctor.

College graduate, currently seeking employment

Better off with Sinn Féin by €4,736 per year on average

Michael, 24, is an engineering graduate of NUIG and is currently looking for a job.

Fixed benefits

- Michael will benefit from the reversal of cuts to Jobseekers' Allowance for those under 26, resulting in an increase of €88 per week – totaling €4,576 per annum.
- He also won't have to pay Water Charges for his accommodation, saving €160.

Married couple with one child, one self-employed earner

Better off with Sinn Féin by between €1,154 and €3,212 per year

Donal and Mary live in Dublin and own their own home. Donal is a self-employed carpenter, earning €40,000 per year. They have a 15-year-old son, Shane.

Fixed benefits

- Abolition of the Property Tax: €244 (on average)
- Abolition of Water Charges: €260
- Donal will benefit from incremental increases to the Self-Employed Tax Credit, resulting in a gain of €650.

Possible benefits

- The family will benefit from a tax credit if Shane attends Irish college, worth €190.
- If a member of the family requires prescriptions, costing in excess of €144 per month, they will save up to €1,728 per year with the rollout of free prescriptions.
- If a family member has to attend A&E during the year, they will save €100 through the abolition of the attendance fee.
- The family may benefit from the extension of a free dental exam to an additional 445,000 people, saving €40.

Retired pensioner, living alone

Better off with Sinn Féin by between €586 and €886 per year

Josephine, 76, is in receipt of the State pension and lives in Cork City.

Fixed benefits

- Abolition of the Property Tax: €244 (on average)
- Abolition of Water Charges: €160
- Josephine will receive increased Fuel Allowance worth a total of €68.
- She will also receive €9.50 per month to provide a Telephone Allowance, allowing her to operate a panic alarm, totaling €114 per year.

Possible benefits

- Josephine may benefit from the abolition of prescription charges for medical card holders, saving her up to €300 per annum.
- She may also benefit from the allocation of increased resources to home help hours.

Single, in part-time employment with grown up children living abroad

Better off with Sinn Féin by between €1,198 and €2,049 per year

Mary is 50 and is single. She lives in rented accommodation in Navan and her adult children live abroad. She works 30 hours per week in a local shop and earns the minimum wage.

Fixed benefits

- Mary will benefit from a 50c increase in the minimum wage, giving her an additional €780, moving towards a Living Wage thereafter.
- Mary will no longer pay USC, putting €258 back in her pocket.
- The abolition of Water Charges saves her €160.

Possible benefits

- If Mary is hospitalised during the year, she won't be subject to inpatient charges up to a maximum of €750.
- Should she require follow-up visits to her GP after hospitalisation, these will be free, saving her €60 per visit.

Part 1

Better for Ireland



Citizens in a united Ireland

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising, support for republican ideals is growing. People are hungry for real change. The 1916 Rising was a defining event in our history and the Proclamation is the defining document in the history of Irish republicanism.

Our task is to apply its principles to the Ireland of today and to achieve the united Ireland of Equals promised in the Proclamation.

Sinn Féin is seeking a new, agreed and united Ireland. We want to build a just, fair and equal Ireland – an economically prosperous and socially and culturally inclusive Ireland. We want to protect our most vulnerable – the elderly, children, the ill, ethnic minorities, those with disabilities – and ensure that equality is the touchstone upon which all policies are formulated.

The republican vision of a united Ireland is based on the principles of equality, inclusion and sovereignty. There can be no place for sectarianism, exclusion or discrimination.

Commitments

- We will campaign to raise public support for an island-wide referendum on Irish unity, allowing the people to have their say.
- We will introduce Northern representation in the Dáil. Northern MPs should be automatically accorded membership of the Dáil, with consultative and speaking rights.
- We will introduce the Thirty-fourth Amendment of the Constitution (Presidential Voting) Bill to extend Presidential voting rights to citizens in the North and abroad.
- We will implement Lá na Poblachta, a Bill to initiate a new bank holiday to mark the Easter Rising.
- We will develop the all-Ireland economy, including having a planned approach to economic development across the island of Ireland, a single tax system and currency, integrating infrastructural development and creating a Border Economic Development zone.
- We will introduce a Green Paper on Irish Unity to begin the practical planning for reunification.
- We will establish an Oireachtas Joint Committee on Irish Reunification with the task of outlining, driving, monitoring and reviewing the transition towards Irish unity.
- We will ensure that the North-South Ministerial Council establishes a committee specifically tasked with harmonising and maximising cooperation in all fields for the benefit of all our people.

- Challenge the British Government to live up to their responsibilities to the peace process on legacy issues and dealing with the past, with particular reference in this State to British state collusion in attacks that resulted in the deaths and injuries of dozens of people in the 26 Counties over decades from the 1970s to the 1990s.

The Irish language

The government parties have done immense damage to the Irish language as a living language. Their policies and approach are hostile and their time in office has been synonymous with a lack of stewardship, leadership or support for the language.

The government's failure to support the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga forced him to resign and Dearg le Fearg saw tens of thousands take to the streets in support of Irish language rights. The government parties' hostility to the language was further evidenced by their ill-fated use of Google Translate on the official 1916 Commemorative website in November 2014. They also made severe cuts to the budgets of Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge at a time of crisis in the Gaeltacht in terms of falling numbers of Irish language speakers living there. They failed to implement the Irish Language 20 Years Strategy and maintained a derogation of the status of the Irish Language in the EU.

Sinn Féin, by contrast, is dedicated to the restoration of the Irish language as the spoken language among the majority of the people in Ireland and its prominence in a multilingual society.

In government, Sinn Féin will deliver on Conradh na Gaeilge plan 'Investment in the Irish language and Gaeltacht from 2016 onwards'.

Commitments

Governance

- We will ensure a senior cabinet minister has responsibility for Gaeltacht Affairs and the Irish Language and a permanent Joint Oireachtas Committee for Gaeltacht Affairs and the Irish Language to ensure vital political will, which has been absent to date, is injected into the State's promotion of the language.
- We will reinstate elections to the board of Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Funding

- We will increase capital funds for Údarás na Gaeltachta, which can be targeted to create new jobs in Gaeltacht communities throughout the State.
- We will set up a €2 million capital fund for Irish language centres similar to a fund operating in the Six Counties called An Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge, which has helped set up 20 Irish language centres across the north. The fund would allow communities to access money to set up Irish language centres across the 26 Counties.
- We will increase funding for Irish language community schemes to support the promotion of the language via community-based projects.
- We will provide funding so that every local authority can offer Irish language classes to their employees.
- We will examine the cuts made to Mná Tí with a view to reversing them

Outreach & integration

- We will support the GAA in its rollout of Líofa in the 26 Counties to get as many people as possible to speak Irish in as many locations as possible across the State. Líofa is a programme operating in the north, originally set up by Minister Carál Ní Chuilinn, that seeks to increase the number of learners working towards fluency and which includes courses that are free to attend, a monthly newsletter and bursary opportunities.
- We will support outreach assistance for parents in Gaeltacht areas and in Irish-medium school catchment areas to encourage parents to use Irish with their children.
- We will invest in support mechanisms for Irish language community radio stations commencing with a one-stop-shop offering advice to volunteers engaged in the running of or thinking of setting up a station.
- We will proactively pursue the implementation of an increased target of 20% of civil servants being proficient in Irish.
- We will support the implementation of the Road Traffic (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2015, which provides for parity of the application of Irish on road signage, whereby the font applied as Gaeilge is of equal size to that applied as Béarla.

Education

- We will introduce Irish language-medium assistants for second level schools throughout the State.
- We will ensure that an Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta is sufficiently resourced to fulfil its remit to develop primary and secondary school textbooks and resources in Irish.
- We will address affordability for working

families and the sustainability of the Gaeltacht regions by providing a 20% tax credit, on expenditure incurred of up to €950, by parents for Gaeltacht courses. For children whose parents are not working, Sinn Féin would grant a deduction at source of 20% of fees for those with medical cards.

An Ghaeilge

Tá dochar mór déanta ag páirtithe an rialtais don Ghaeilge mar theanga bheo. Tá a bpolasaithe agus a gcur chuige naimhdeach agus le linn a gcuid ama in oifig bhí easpa maoirseachta, ceannaireachta nó tacaíochta ann don teanga.

Mar gheall ar theip an rialtais tacaíocht a thabhairt d'Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga b'éigean dó éirigh. Nuair a bhí Dearg le Fearg ann tháinig na mílte amach ar na sráideanna ag tacú le cearta Gaeilge. Fianaise eile ar naimhdeas pháirtithe an rialtais i leith na teamga ba a an praiseach a rinne siad nuair a d'úsáid siad Google Translate ar shuíomh gréasan oifigiúil comórtha 1916 i mí na Samhna 2014. Rinne siad ciorruithe déine chomh maith ar bhuiséad Údarás na Gaeltachta agus ar bhuiséad Fhoras na Gaeilge ag am géarchéime sa Ghaeltacht maidir le líon na gcainteoirí Gaeilge a chónaíonn ansin a bheith ag titim. Theip orthu Straitéis 20 bliain don Ghaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm agus choinnigh siad maolú ar stádas na Gaeilge san AE.

Tá Sinn Féin, áfach, tiomanta don Ghaeilge a athréimniú mar theanga labhartha i measc fhormór na ndaoine in Éirinn agus í a bheith i lár an aonaigh is sochaí ilteangach.

Má thoghtar chun an rialtais iad chuirfeadh Sinn Féin an maoiniú ar fáil agus díreodh siad ar scéimeanna a mholtar i bplean Chonradh na Gaeilge, Infheistíochta sa Ghaeilge agus sa Ghaeltacht ó 2016 ar aghaidh.

Gealltanais

Rialachas

- Ceapfaimid Aire sinsearach rialtais le freaghracht as Gnótháí Gaeltachta agus an Ghaeilge agus Comhchoiste Oireachtas do Ghnótháí Gaeltachta agus don Ghaeilge lena chinntíú go gcuirfear an toil pholaitiúil ríthábhachtach, atá in easnamh go dtí seo, isteach i gcr chun cinn na teanga ó thaobh an stáit de.
- Tabharfaimid toghcháin ar ais le haghaidh bhord Údarás na Gaeltachta.

Maoiniú

- Méadóimid cistí caipitiúla d'Údarás na Gaeltachta, a bheifear in ann a dhíriú ar phoist nua a chruthú i bpobail Ghaeltachta ar fud na tíre.
- Cuirfimid ar bun €2 milliún de chist caipitiúil d'ionaid Ghaeilge, cosúil le ciste atá ar siúl sna sé hontae dar teideal An Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge, a chuidigh le 20 ionad Gaeilge a chur ar bun ar fud an tuaiscirt. Chomh maith leis sin ligfeadh an ciste seo do phobail airgead a rochain le hionaid Ghaeilge a chur ar bun ar fud na 26 chontae.
- Méadóimid maoiniú do scéimeanna pobail Gaeilge le tacú le cur chun cinn na teanga trí thionscadail atá bunaithe i bpobail.
- Cuirfimid maoiniú ar fáil ionas gur féidir le gach Údarás Áitiúil ranganna Gaeilge a thairiscint dá bhfoistaithe.

For-rochtain & imeascadh

- Tacóimid le CLG agus é ag rolladh amach Líofa sna 26 chontae leis an oiread daoine agus is féidir a spreagadh leis an nGaeilge a labhairt, san oiread áit agus is féidir ar fud na tíre. Is é is Líofa ann clár atá ar siúl sa tuaisceart, curtha ar bun ag an Aire Carál Ní Chuilinn, a fhéachann le líon na bhfoghlaimeoirí atá ag obair i droe na líofachta a mhéadú. Mar chuid de seo tá cúrsaí saor in aisce, nuachtáitir mhíosúil agus deiseanna ar sparánachtaí.
- Tacóimid le cúnamh for-rochtana do thuismitheoirí i gceantair Ghaeltachta agus i scoilcheantair scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge le tuismitheoirí a spreagadh le Gaeilge a úsáid lena leanaí.
- Infheisteoimid i meicníochtaí tacaíochta do stáisiúin raidió phobail lán-Ghaeilge, ag tosú le ceardlann le comhairle a thabhairt do shaorálaithe atá i mbun stáisiún a reáchtáil nó atá ag smaoineamh air.
- Leanfaimid go gníomhach do sprioc níos mó, 20%, de státseirbhísí inniúil sa Ghaeilge.
- Tacóimid le feidhmiú an Bhill um Thrácht Bóithre (Leasú) (Uimh.2) 2015 a dhéanann foráil do chomhionannas i bhfeidhmiú na Gaeilge ar chomharthaí bóithre, mar a mbeidh an cló i nGaeilge ar chómhéid leis an gcló i mBéarla.

Oideachas

- Tabharfaimid isteach cúntoir lán-Ghaeilge d'iar-bhunscoileanna ar fud na tíre.
- Cinnteoimid go bhfuil acmhainní imleora ag an gComhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta lena shainchúram a chomhlíonadh téacsleabhair agus acmhainní bunscoile agus iar-bhunscoile a fhorbairt i nGaeilge.
- Cuirfimid le hinacmhainneacht do theaghláigh atá ag obair agus inbhuanaitheacht do cheantair Ghaeltachta trí 20% de chreidmheasa cánach a chur ar fáil maidir le caiteachas a

thabhaíonn tuismitheoirí do leanaí do chúrsaí Gealtachta, socraithe ag €950 mar uasmhéis do gach leanbh. Maidir le leanaí nach bhfuil a dtuismitheoirí ag obair, cheadódh Sinn Féin asbhaint ag an bhfoinse le haghaidh 20% de tháillí, má tá cárta leighis agat.

Heritage - Moore Street & Revolutionary Quarter

We will protect and restore the entire Moore Street terrace, numbers 10-25, as the site of the last act of the 1916 Easter Rising. Sinn Féin has argued for decades that commemorating and properly marking the Rising will be valuable to us in terms of our own historical heritage but also as a means of attracting and educating tourists about our past and present. We have allowed for a €1 billion discretionary capital fund, over the term of government, to finance any additional investment needed in projects such as this.

Equality & human rights

Promoting equality and human rights is at the very core of republicanism and of Sinn Féin's agenda for change. We campaigned in support of the Marriage Equality Referendum and for language rights. We also brought forward a number of key pieces of equality legislation, including a Bill to recognise the ethnicity of the Traveller community and we published a major report on Direct Provision. We believe that all human rights – including economic and social rights – can and must be enforceable. We are committed to a range of proposals to strengthen equality and human rights protections and to move us closer towards full equality for women, children, older people, people with disabilities, people of all ethnicities and lesbian/gay/bisexual and transgender people.

We are committed to the establishment of an enforceable All-Ireland Charter of Rights, as promised under the Good Friday Agreement.

Commitments

- We will end Direct Provision and replace it with a not-for-profit model that has integration and human rights best practice at its core.
- We will regularise undocumented migrants and introduce comprehensive legislation dealing with all aspects of immigration and residence in the State.

- We will enact the ICCL's Criminal Law (Hate Crime) Amendment Bill 2015 to address racism, sectarianism and homophobia in Irish society.
- We will initiate a renewed five-year National Action Plan Against Racism.
- We will amend the International Protection Bill 2015 to address deficiencies in relation to children's rights, family reunification, and access to work and education.
- We will significantly increase funding to domestic violence support organisations and refuges, and we will implement the Istanbul Convention.
- We will ensure the State recognises the ethnicity status of the Travelling community , including their right to traveller specific accommodation.
- We will develop a working group tasked with examining what has worked best in terms of supporting survivors of wrongs or injuries for which the State is accountable, including those affected by abuse in children's institutions, Mother and Baby homes and Magdalene Laundries; and by the Thalidomide, Sympphysiotomy and Hepatitis C scandals. In doing this, we will build closer relationships with the agencies representing survivors. This group will develop recommendations on urgent legislation (e.g. adoption rights) and on financial, medical and other assistance. It will also address crisis areas such as the expiration of Statutes of Limitations.
- Ensure transgender services are provided regionally rather than centralised in Dublin.
- End the blood ban for gay and bisexual men to give blood.
- Ban so called 'reparative therapies' as they are dangerous to individuals.
- Extending defamatory legislation to include offensive language towards the LGB&T community.

Ireland on the international stage

As a small island, it is important that Ireland spreads its diplomatic net as wide as possible in order to maximise international influence and push key foreign affairs priorities. Sinn Féin is committed to an independent and progressive Irish international relations policy, one that will prioritise neutrality, human rights, mutually beneficial trade, development, international law, and equality.

Commitments

Ireland's international role

- We will formally recognise the State of Palestine.
- Europe is facing its biggest refugee crisis since World War Two and we will ensure that Ireland plays a leading role in tackling this humanitarian crisis.
- We will ensure the Irish Naval Service continues to conduct lifesaving rescue operations in the Mediterranean.
- We will ensure that the Irish State plays a proactive role at an international level to encourage a cessation of hostilities in Syria and the creation of an inclusive peace process, and pursue a similar approach to other conflicts around the world.
- We will ensure that the State continues to engage fully and vigorously with the UN and its structures, including peacekeeping, but we will also lead calls for a reforming of the UN, its offices and programmes, with particular emphasis on the Security Council.

Neutrality

- We will ensure that the State adheres to a policy of positive neutrality.
- We will oppose the further militarisation of the EU and attempts to create a standing EU army, and we will terminate Ireland's involvement in EU Battle Groups and the use of Irish airports by foreign armies engaged in war.
- We will hold a referendum on inserting neutrality into Bunreacht na hÉireann.
- We will continue to support the deployment of Irish troops on UN-mandated peacekeeping missions around the world that enhance our neutrality.

Irish Aid

- We will be strong supporters of the Irish Aid programme. We believe Irish people should be rightly proud that this programme is widely recognised as one of the most effective actors in the delivery of development aid worldwide.
- We will increase funding on ODA and ensure the State works towards its ODA targets. However, it must be noted that ODA is not a tap that can be turned on and off and such a plan would need proactive consultation, and short-, medium-, and long-term projects and targets, rather than simple yearly targets.
- In government we will immediately commence work on an interdepartmental plan to reach the 0.7% target as a matter of priority.
- In order to enhance government accountability and transparency, we will ensure that our plans on how and when we can reach the target will be publicly available.

- Sinn Féin will also pursue other overarching development-friendly policies in government to complement our ODA spend.
- Sinn Féin strongly welcomes the global agreement reached on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In government we will establish a national action plan to implement and monitor the State's activity on reaching the targets and goals contained in the SDGs. This will be done within a robust and overarching Policy Coherence for Development framework that will be at the core of our government's work.

Trade & TTIP

- We will ensure that the State plays a positive role at European and global level as a champion for fair global trade rules and policies that prioritise and support, rather than undermine, the needs of poor countries.
- We are concerned that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) will have significant negative implications for Ireland, particularly in the areas of agriculture, state sovereignty, democratic decision making, public procurement, workers' rights, environmental and food safety regulations, and many other areas. We will oppose any TTIP agreement that negatively affects Ireland or that includes provision for an undemocratic Investor State Dispute Settlement mechanism.
- The potential implications of TTIP are too important and too dangerous for details to be kept from European citizens and we will work towards ensuring that documents relating to the TTIP negotiations are made public.

European Union

Recent governments have been totally deferential to the EU and its most powerful member states.

Sinn Féin in government will seek to build relationships with other member states on the basis of equality and to provide leadership for those who are opposed to the Austerity agenda of the EU. In particular we will:

- uphold the right of democratically elected governments to decide their social and economic priorities in the interests of their own people.
- seek to return powers to EU member states and increase the influence of member state parliaments in the EU legislative process.
- support reforms of the EU which are aimed at reducing the power of the European Commission, making it more transparent and accountable to the European and member state parliaments; and increasing the influence of smaller member states.
- seek a growth and investment oriented policy of the EU, aimed at creating jobs and at defending workers' pay and conditions.

- seek to maximise EU support for the Irish peace process and Irish unity.

Taking on the golden circles & vested interests

In its now infamous five-point plan Fine Gael promised the electorate that it would overhaul the political system and stamp out the cronyism that had become the norm under Fianna Fáil. This was to prove an empty promise and has been dropped from Fine Gael's latest three-step-plan.

The Taoiseach's attempts to get a seat for John McNulty in the Seanad and the eleventh hour circumvention of the public process by the Tánaiste to appoint David Begg chair of the Pensions Authority are just two examples of many that show cronyism is alive and well in Fine Gael and the Labour Party.

We have watched for decades as a circle of wealthy and well connected, seemingly teflon elites, have protected and enriched themselves through boom times and recessions alike at huge cost to the Irish people.

Commitments

Tackle board cronyism

- We will overhaul appointments to State boards to ensure multiple directorships are limited.
- We will make all appointments transparent by ensuring they're all advertised on publicjobs.ie and made through a competitive interview process.
- We will ensure directors' salaries are fair.
- We will implement gender quotas.
- We will provide for timely provision of annual accounts.

NAMA

- We will slow down the wind-up of NAMA to allow for full commercial evaluation of all loans.
- We will audit remaining assets for societal and economic use.
- We will ensure NAMA developers are not acting as bad landlords and review their salaries.
- We will provide for a cooling-off period for NAMA employees so they are not entering the private sector with valuable information.
- We will establish a Commission of Inquiry into the management and operation of NAMA.

No privatisation of State assets

- We will end the policy of selling off State assets and shareholdings under the State Assets Disposal Programme and will commit to protecting key strategic assets as well as retaining all remaining State assets and shareholdings.
- We will stop the planned privatisation of 10% of Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann and oppose any future attempts at privatisation of public transport companies.
- Abolish domestic water charges and dismantle Irish Water.
- Stop the metering project and redirect the remaining monies to direct investment in infrastructure.
- Establish an independent Commission on Water Services to examine the most appropriate public ownership model to report back to Government within 9 months.
- Underpin the new model for a public water service in legislation.
- Hold a referendum to enshrine the public ownership of Ireland's water services in the Constitution.
- Roll out a major water conservation programme in conjunction with local authorities.

Accountability

- Where tribunals make findings against individuals and produce comprehensive reports, we will ensure the State acts on those findings within the Statute of Limitations available for criminal prosecutions.
- We will undertake an independent audit of the State's oversight agencies to combat white-collar crime, including the Criminal Assets Bureau, the Office of the Directorate of Corporate Enforcement, the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation, the Central Bank, Revenue, the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation and the Competition Authority.

Accountability in politics

People have become justifiably disillusioned with politicians and the political system. Sinn Féin believes politicians should be accountable to the people they serve. We will bring about a new culture of transparency and accountability in politics.

Commitments

Elections & democracy

- We will introduce a partial list system, electing one third of the Dáil from party lists and the remainder from seven-seat constituencies, so that election results more accurately reflect actual voter preference.
- We will reduce the voting age and extend voting rights to citizens in the North and to the Diaspora.
- We will establish a fresh citizens' convention to discuss political reform, including of the Dáil and Seanad.
- We will introduce equality budgeting through amendments to existing legislation and provide for equality proofing of all government policy, budgets and public bodies through impact assessments.

The Dáil

- We will shift the balance of control of the Dáil agenda. Under Standing Order 26, the order of Dáil business is determined by the Taoiseach. We will amend standing orders so that the whips' meeting has greater influence in the determination of the agenda, including over the use of guillotines, which should be restricted to emergency situations only.
- We will give Dáil Committees more powers, including increased public consultation and expert witness hearings, and greater numbers of meetings throughout the State.
- We will amend the Standing Orders governing parliamentary questions to promote more thorough accountability of government to the public via their Dáil representatives. It is currently common practice for Ministers to give incomplete answers or to avoid answering questions altogether, often hiding behind arms-length bodies as justification. This must be tackled.
- We will endeavour to ensure that at least 30% of all Ministers and Junior Ministers are women.

Seanad

- We will ensure that the Seanad becomes a fully inclusive, representative and accountable institution. This requires: direct election by way of universal franchise of all Irish citizens on the same day as the Dáil vote; Northern and Diaspora representation; 50% women members; and representation of marginalised minority groups within Irish society. The primary role of the Seanad should be independent initial scrutiny of EU legislation from proposal stage and of Statutory Instruments and Ministerial appointments; and to ensure equality-proofing of all legislation.

Public standards

- We will amend the Public Standards legislation to ensure all public sector officials from Principal Officer grade upwards in the civil and public service are required to make public comprehensive declarations of interests on assets and debts to the value of €25,000 and above, excluding the family home.
- We will provide for the making of anonymous and oral complaints to the Public Sector Standards Commissioner, as recommended by the Mahon Tribunal.

Part 2

For a fair recovery



BETTER4WORKERS
& FAMILIES

Fine Gael and Labour's two-tier recovery

We need a recovery that is fair and sustainable. The current recovery is neither.

Purchasing a home is again out of the reach of the average family because of a lack of housing supply, yet we have little work being created for the 150,000 construction workers who lost their jobs during the economic crisis.

Hundreds more of our most vulnerable citizens are being forced to endure treatment on hospital trolleys in emergency departments.

And hundreds of thousands of families are being ripped off by banks that are refusing to pass on interest rate savings to mortgage holders.

The legacy of Fianna Fáil

All of these woes are symptoms of the pursuit of unfair and unsustainable economic policies by Fine Gael and Labour, parties that have merely perpetuated the short-term boom and bust policies of Fianna Fáil.

Instead of investing in our economy and ensuring all citizens are afforded a decent quality of life and the opportunity of a good job, the priority of Fine Gael, Labour and Fianna Fáil is to cut taxes that benefit the rich to the detriment of the average worker – the same type of policies that led to the economic crisis in the first place.

External factors influencing economic growth

The Department of Finance has forecast economic growth of 4.3% for 2016 and growth is expected to average around 3% per annum thereafter.

We are conscious that these growth figures are vulnerable to negative external factors that may affect Ireland's spending capabilities, given that we operate within the parameters of European Union fiscal rules.

Extremely favourable external conditions are the primary drivers of current growth in the economy; in particular the sharp decline in the value of the Euro against Sterling and the US Dollar, historically low interest rates across Europe and a collapse in international oil prices over the past twelve months.

Building a Fair Recovery

The austerity agenda of Fine Gael, Labour, Fianna Fáil and the Troika played no hand, act or part in bringing about the economic green shoots we are currently witnessing. All their cutbacks achieved were a prolonging of the economic crisis, the decimation of public services and a widening gap of economic and social inequality.

By contrast, our priorities will be to bring fairness, stability and sustainability to economic policy development. We will ensure the economy serves society, not the other way around, and we will prioritise investment in employment and build a fair tax system.

EU rules and Ireland

Sinn Féin stands for Irish sovereignty and the right of Irish governments to make economic choices in the best interests of the Irish people.

We opposed the Fiscal (Austerity) Treaty because we knew that the rules set out in it were not in Ireland's interests, involved a loss of economic sovereignty and had the potential to act as a serious impediment to any future government taking the type of decisions that are needed.

We have been proved correct. The acceptance of the Treaty has tied our hands significantly. We will continue to challenge these rules and build support at EU level for their re-negotiation.

In the shorter term we will work to achieve the type of flexibilities to these rules that have been afforded to other States within the EU.

The following sections set out our commitments on jobs, workers' rights, taxation, public sector pay, social protection, mortgages, the banking sector, banking and debt.

Creating jobs

Long-term economic recovery can only be secured through the creation of good jobs and the development of an innovative indigenous enterprise sector.

Our priority is the creation of decent jobs with decent pay and to deliver for our Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector. There are 192,000 small-and medium-sized businesses across the State, employing over 860,000 people; these businesses are the driving force of economic activity in the State.

We will set ambitious targets for regionally balancing foreign investment and delivering an integrated enterprise policy that maximises the growth potential of domestic entrepreneurs and businesses.

The Department of Finance have forecast increases in employment based on expected growth in core domestic demand for the period from 2017 to 2021 of 187,969 jobs. These jobs will be created regardless of policy changes. Our jobs plan will mean ultimately in the region of 250,000 jobs will be created.

We will use the budget room available over the next five years to invest heavily in capital projects, to deliver tens of thousands of jobs and to fill infrastructural needs in water, housing, schools, health, broadband and transport. Our current spending will also create jobs in frontline services and act as a stimulus for job creation in the private sector.

Commitments

Investing in job creation

- Our significant investment in infrastructure and public services, such as in housing, health and education, will deliver 250,000 jobs over the next five years.
- We will open up public procurement to small businesses, maximising this annual €12 billion stimulus for domestic businesses.
- We will attach social clauses to public works contracts.
- We will establish a review of compliance and enforcement of labour and employment obligations attached to public works contracts.
- We have included in the rural Ireland section of this manifesto and in the launch of our West of Ireland policy a series of jobs initiatives which aim to address the historical regional imbalance in job creation.

Job creation through tax and legislative reforms

- We will abolish upward-only rents.
- We will ease administration of the tax system for businesses by simplifying filing arrangements for Corporation and Income Tax and by ending delays in VAT registration.
- We will extend Startup Refunds for Entrepreneurs (SURE) to the self-employed.
- We will support Ireland's microbreweries by extending tax relief for beer production.
- We will double the Trading Online Voucher Scheme and develop an inter-departmental strategy to develop an ambitious e-Commerce plan, increasing the number of indigenous small businesses trading online.

- We will initiate an inter-departmental review, led by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, to consider a fairer system for calculating commercial rates for small businesses.

Job creation in the arts and tourism sectors

- We will increase funding to the Arts Council by 45% over the lifetime of the next government and ensure all grants and awards are made fairly and transparently. We will ensure through this funding, and through investment in community development programmes, that the arts play a key role in creating employment and recreation in communities, particularly in rural Ireland.
- We will support better pay for musicians, writers, visual artists, actors and those involved in set productions through engagement with the Irish Writers Union, the Musicians Union of Ireland, Equity, the Playwrights and Screenwriters Guild and all other relevant bodies.
- We will support artists, as the essential component of the arts world, in their lobbying for a better return from publishing and distribution companies, to make the arts a viable employment option.
- We will maintain film relief as a way of supporting the Irish film industry.
- We will maintain the 9% VAT rate for the tourism and hospitality sector.

Protecting jobs through credit sources and good governance

- We will implement in full the Construction Contracts Act to protect sub-contractors.
- We will critically engage with the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) to ensure Irish microbusinesses, cooperatives and social enterprise actors can access much needed financial supports.
- We will advocate for strengthened European Union supports for the social and cooperative economy and for investment in the area of 'Green Growth'.

Workers' rights

Ireland has one of the highest rates of low pay in the OECD and of underemployment in the European Union. Short-hour, low-paid, insecure and precarious work is on the rise, putting undue pressure on workers and their families, who are unable to plan childcare and their finances from week to week.

In advance of the 1918 general election, Sinn Féin produced a handbill declaring: 'That where Irish resources are being developed or where industries exist, Sinn Féiners shall make it their business to secure that workers are paid a Living Wage.'

A century later, the fundamental aspirations of workers remain the same – fair pay, secure hours and adequate safeguards against exploitation. Women, migrant workers and young people remain particularly vulnerable to ill-treatment in the workplace, with those working in the retail, hospitality and care sectors faring the worst. We are determined to create jobs that are long-term, sustainable, decent paying and that recognise trade union rights.

Commitments

A better deal for workers

- We will increase the National Minimum Wage to €9.65 an hour and continue to track the hourly rate against median earnings and the cost of living.
- We support the introduction of a ‘Living Wage’, and as a first step towards its introduction we will make the public sector a Living Wage employer.
- We will amend industrial relations legislation to provide for mandatory trade union recognition and collective bargaining rights.
- We will tackle the uncertainty created by insecure and low-hour contracts by introducing legislation that provides for Fair Hours contracts.
- We will strengthen compliance and enforcement of employment and workers’ rights through legislative changes and by providing additional resources to the Workplace Relations Commission Inspection Services.

The all-Ireland economy

Under the Good Friday Agreement and other agreements there are common sense and practical proposals to develop cross border links. This is to the mutual benefit of everyone. Even within the current constitutional arrangements these need to be developed. Sinn Féin in government, north and south will champion such an approach.

There are no advantages for an island nation of 6.4 million people in having two separate tax regimes, two currencies, two public service systems and two separate, competing economies. We would all be better off with a single economy within Ireland. A United Ireland would grow the economy north and south. There are many examples in which a better service has been delivered through an all-Ireland approach, e.g., marketing the island as a whole for tourism, the joint cancer centre in Derry and the delivery of paediatric cardiac care from Dublin on an all-Ireland basis. The Narrow Water

Bridge and the A5 upgrade are other examples of projects that would be to our mutual benefit.

Recent academic reports have found that there would be a boost of up to €35.6 billion in GDP for the island of Ireland in the first eight years of economic unification. This underlines the importance of pursuing greater integration of our economies. In government we will advance the Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Report on the All-Island Economy.

Commitments

- We will develop the all-Ireland economy, including having a planned approach to economic development across the island of Ireland.
- We will start planning for all-island cooperation within public services and identify all-island shared projects from planning stage to completion.
- We will create a Border Economic Development Zone to harmonise trade and maximise returns for border business.
- We will remove transaction costs for cross-border trade.
- We will campaign for all-Ireland representation at the EU Commission and Council of Ministers.
- We are committed to the A5 funding package agreed as part of the Fresh Start Agreement and to working with the Northern Executive to secure additional funding.
- We are committed to working with the relevant local authorities, the Executive and the European Union to ensure the Narrow Water Bridge project is completed.
- As part of our commitment to develop the North West, we will work with the Executive to ensure that the potential of the North West Gateway Initiative is fully realised. Donegal and Derry & Strabane Councils will take the lead on this project and we will ensure the necessary matched funding is made available.
- We will work with the Executive to ensure the full potential of the Ulster Canal is realised. An initial funding commitment will be allocated once the Upper Lough Erne to Castle Saunderson section has been completed.
- We will ensure that social clauses are built into all joint publicly funded North/South capital projects.

A fair tax system

Sinn Féin in government will deliver a fair tax system. We will ease the tax burden on the average worker, including those who are self-employed, and asking those who earn the most to pay their fair share.

We view the tax system as a whole. Tax is not just confined to your payslip. Other taxes such as VAT, Water Charges and the Local Property Tax form part of the system and impact on peoples pay.

To illustrate how unfair our tax system is, of the €5.5 billion in tax breaks given in 2012, the Revenue Commissioners estimate that 53% of these went to the top 10% of earners.

The abolition of the Universal Social Charge in its entirety will only add to this unfairness as this move benefits the better off a lot more than someone on an ordinary wage. For example, Enda Kenny, who earns €183,350, will gain €12,210 from the abolition of the USC. Fine Gael's proposed reductions will put more money in the pockets of higher earners, reducing the availability of money that could and should be spent on reducing waiting times in A&E departments, hiring speech and language therapists to benefit children, and hiring more gardaí and teachers.

Commitments

Bringing fairness to the tax system

- We will abolish the Local Property Tax, saving 1.8 million homeowners an average of €244 per year.
- We will scrap Water Charges, saving a family of two adults €260 per year.
- We will make the tax system progressive by removing workers earning under €19,572 from the USC net, benefiting 277,000 workers.
- We will ease the tax burden on the self-employed, moving towards the equalisation of the Self-Employed Tax Credit with the PAYE Tax Credit.

Increasing the tax take

- We will increase the overall tax take by raising discretionary tax rates, such as the Betting Tax, and by introducing a Sugar Tax.
- We will review all marginal tax reliefs, beginning with a staggered reduction of private pension tax reliefs.
- We will increase social contributions by introducing a new 15.75% employer's rate of PRSI on the portion of salary paid in excess of €100,000.

- We will target tax fraud and loopholes by allocating additional resources to the Revenue Commissioners to specifically tackle tax evasion and black market activity.

Taxing wealth

- We will improve tax equality and increase the tax take, increasing the rates of Capital Acquisition Tax and Capital Gains Tax for passive investments that don't help the real economy and examine the introduction of a Wealth Tax.
- We will ask the top 6% of earners to pay an additional 7 cent out of every euro earned on income over €100,000. This new band would be applied on an individual basis and not on the joint income of a couple.

Business tax

- We will maintain Corporation Tax at 12.5%.
- We will ensure that companies cannot engage in artificial arrangements to avoid tax, and we will engage with international developments for tax fairness and restore Ireland's reputation as a fair, attractive, open and ethical business tax economy.
- We will ensure that employees and employers get relief (when the increase in the minimum wage under Sinn Féin is implemented) by increasing employee and employer PRSI bands in line with the increase in the national wage.

Tax relief for charities

- We recognise the anomaly whereby charities are not afforded the same treatment as many businesses that are able to reclaim VAT incurred and we are concerned that charities' inability to reclaim VAT is hindering their ability to achieve their objectives. We will, therefore, introduce a capped (€20 million) VAT compensation scheme for charitable organisations.

Improving conditions for public sector workers

We are committed to increased investment in public services. In health, education, and local government, cuts have put huge pressure on those working in frontline services. Public sector workers have taken pay cuts of up to 14% on average, with reduced terms and conditions of employment.

We are committed to decent work for decent pay and to reducing the gap between wages at the top and the bottom.

The Lansdowne Road Agreement is imperfect, but it does give something back to those on low and middle incomes. In government, we will honour the agreement. We also intend reducing the pay of those in the public sector who earn over €2,000 a week to bring equality to the system and to protect lower earning public sector workers.

Commitments

The political system leading from the front

- We will reduce TDs' salaries to €75,000 and Senators' salaries to €60,000.
- We will reduce the salary top-ups of An Taoiseach and Ministers by 50%.
- We will reduce excessive pension payments to former Taoisigh, Ministers and top civil servants.
- We will cap the pay of special advisors to the Taoiseach and Ministers at €75,000.

Public sector pay agreements

- We will honour the terms of the Lansdowne Road Agreement.
- We will make the public sector a 'Living Wage' employer.
- We will ensure that all future public sector pay agreements are aimed at delivering for low- and middle-income workers and achieving greater pay parity, and we have set aside a sum for future pay agreements.

Fairness for public sector workers

- We will phase out the use of agency workers through the recruitment of additional frontline staff.
- We will reduce senior public management pay by 15% on income earned over €100,000 and by 30% on income over €150,000 (excluding consultants in hospitals - see detail of health policy)
- We will commission an independent review of pay and pensions in the public sector.

Social protection

Social protection payments exist to support and protect the most vulnerable in our society.

Fine Gael, Labour and Fianna Fáil all used their terms in office to introduce cuts that have impacted severely on those most in need, while the bankers and their friends who caused Ireland's economic problems got off scot free.

When it mattered, Fianna Fáil targeted the young and the old and cut child benefit. Fine Gael and Labour subsequently promised to protect citizens in receipt of social welfare payments but did the same and worse with their cradle to the grave cuts – from Maternity Benefit to the Bereavement Grant. They cut young people's Jobseekers' Allowance further and deeper than their predecessor and, most cruelly, cut the Respite Care Grant.

The numbers experiencing two or more types of enforced deprivation, i.e. having to go without basics such as a warm waterproof coat, heating for their home, nutritious food or even minimal social opportunities, has increased from 11.8% in 2007 to 29%, and the number of people living in consistent poverty has almost doubled.

Discrimination in pensions

The Homemakers Disregard Scheme seeks to protect the pension rights of people who have left the workforce for a period of time in order to care for a young child or person with an illness or disability. It is limited to years spent as a homemaker after April 1994 and thousands of women, including those who were subject to the civil service 'marriage bar', are excluded. Sinn Féin requested a costing from the Department on the extension of the scheme to cover periods of homemaking prior to 1994 but the Department responded that they could not provide an estimate.

Joan Burton promised to introduce a more expansive Homemakers Credit Scheme, but instead instituted reforms to the pension system that disproportionately hurt these very same women. The government introduced new rate bands, resulting in new pensioners facing cuts of up to €1,497 per year. Not surprisingly, it is women, in our pension system, who will bear the brunt of these latest cuts.

Commitments

Increases for the most vulnerable and protecting jobseekers from exploitation

- We will reinstate the full rate of Jobseekers' Allowance for under 26s; recognise the cost of disability by increasing Disability Allowance by €20; increase Fuel Allowance, Family Income Supplement and the Back to School Allowance; raise the cut-off age of the One-Parent Family Payment to 12 years old; restore the Bereavement Grant; and introduce a Telephone Allowance.
- We will ensure activation schemes are of high quality and support job creation by shutting down the JobBridge and Gateway schemes and making greater use of the JobsPlus and Community Employment Schemes.

Securing a minimum standard of income

- We will legislate to provide for the establishment of a Social Protection Adequacy Commission. The principle function of the commission would be to examine the minimum income required by different household types in receipt of social welfare to secure a Minimum Essential Standard of Living and make associated annual recommendations to the Minister for adjustments to social welfare rates of payment. The commission would build on the evidence-based consensus budgeting model developed by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice and its membership would include representation from those impacted by budgetary decisions.

Pensions

- Pension equality for women will be front and centre in the development of our road map for a sustainable Social Insurance Fund and associated pension reform.
- We will reverse the cuts to pension rates and bands by restoring them to their pre-September 2012 position. We will also drop the contributions requirement for state pension eligibility from 520 to 260 contributions.
- The current government raised the pension eligibility age to 66, forcing many older people whose employment contracts concluded at 65 years of age onto the dole. We will reinstate the State Pension (Transition) for 65-year-olds.
- Tax reliefs on private pensions disproportionately benefit the wealthiest and have failed to increase pension coverage. We will standardise these reliefs and reduce the standard fund threshold in order to prioritise and bolster the State pension – the source of income on which the majority of older people depend in retirement.

- We will introduce legislation providing for a new Priority Order for the distribution of funds in defined benefit pension schemes that are in deficit to ensure fairer protection for pensioners – active and deferred members alike.

Social Insurance Fund

- we will produce a road map to address the long-term deficit in the Social Insurance Fund and place it on a sustainable footing, with a view to ensuring the delivery of fair and accessible income supports.
- We will produce legislation introducing, initially on a voluntary basis, an option for the self-employed to pay a new rate of PRSI linked to additional benefits.

Helping people with mortgages

The latest Central Bank figures from the third quarter of 2015 tell us that 92,291 family homes are in arrears. Shockingly, the figures also show that four families a day are losing their homes.

Fine Gael and Labour have acted shamefully from the beginning of the mortgage crisis. Time after time they have sided with the banks against struggling homeowners. In one of their most shameful acts, they changed the law to make it easier for banks to repossess family homes and worked with the Central Bank to weaken the Code of Conduct so that banks could put more pressure on homeowners; all while their schemes to prevent repossession or so-called voluntary surrenders have been abysmal failures.

We gave a guarded welcome to the introduction of mortgage cap lending rules by the Central Bank. Though the role of mortgages in the economic collapse has been overstated, reform was needed. However, better wages and a greater supply of social housing to keep house prices down have an important role to play in making homes affordable. Commitments

Fairness for mortgage holders

- We will make the Central Bank publish data regularly on Irish interest rates so the public can see how they compare to European Union norms.
- We will empower the Central Bank to set caps on interest rates chargeable by banks.
- We will ensure consumer protection is a key priority of the Central Bank.

Protecting the family home

- We will reinstate stronger protection for the family home in legislation.
- We will seek amendments to the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Targets to no longer accept reposessions as ‘solutions’, thereby putting pressure on banks to find solutions or face consequences such as greater capital requirements (equivalent to fines).
- We will ensure banks offer each of the solutions outlined by the Central Bank before repossessing, not just the ones they want to offer.

Supporting people to buy their first home

- We will initiate a review of the socio-economic impact of the Central Bank’s mortgage rules with a view to ensuring that the rules are working and not making homes unaffordable.
- We will increase investment as per our housing policies to offer housing choices outside of mortgages and private ownership/renting.

Dealing with personal debt

- We will ensure debt collection services are regulated, with a strong, legally enforceable Code of Conduct.
- We will ensure there is a cap on the rates chargeable by those lending money to protect the vulnerable from exploitation.

Protecting consumer rights

- We will remove any legal ambiguity over the status of the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears.
- We will overhaul the processes and powers of the Financial Services Ombudsman to strengthen its mandate and effectiveness.
- We will ensure a change to the rules so that consumers can make a complaint to the Financial Services Ombudsman within two years of when they became aware of an infringement, even outside the normal statute of limitations.

Dealing with the banking sector

After the disastrous Fianna Fáil decisions of 2008/2009, the Irish people became owners and part-owners of five banks. The infamous Anglo Irish and Irish Nationwide were beyond all repair, yet the State rescued them at a cost of €34 billion. The other rescued banks – AIB, Permanent TSB and Bank of Ireland – survived, albeit with their reputations in tatters and only because of the taxpayer. The €30 billion taxpayers paid for these banks was only an upfront cost; the knock-on costs of accompanying austerity remain with us today and have damaged society severely.

Despite being owned by the State, these banks have acted appallingly – evicting thousands of families, ripping off many more by moving them off tracker mortgages and by refusing to pass on ECB interest rate cuts.

The State currently owns 14% of Bank of Ireland, 75% of Permanent TSB and over 99% of AIB. These holdings are economic and strategic assets. In particular, the handling of the State’s ownership of AIB is one of the biggest questions that will face the next government.

For Sinn Féin, the question is not when we should we sell AIB, but whether we should sell what is now a profitable bank. The State is now receiving dividends from the profits AIB makes. Any windfall from selling the bank can only be used to write down debt, which may lead to a saving on debt interest, but those savings can be more than offset by the receipt of annual dividends and the benefits of having a State bank investing in the domestic economy.

In their Programme for Government, Fine Gael and Labour said they respected the ethos of the Credit Union movement and recognised that Credit Unions are different to the banks. However, since 2011 Credit Unions have been subjected to unprecedented restrictions and limitations. The Credit Union movement has stood with the people through years of hardship and the Irish people have stood with it. The more than 2.9 million members in 352 credit unions across the State have in excess of €11 billion in savings, €3.5 billion on loan and more than €13 billion in total assets. Now is the time to allow Credit Unions to do even more in our communities and for our communities.

Commitments

A better banking sector

- We will not be rushed into the sale of any State asset. The decision to sell any stake in Permanent TSB, Bank of Ireland or AIB must be based on the best interests of the Irish people in the long term.
- It is our intention to keep AIB in State ownership for the next five years at least, subject to an application for retrospective recapitalisation at its historic value, during which time a decision based on Irish economic interests will be taken as to whether to retain ownership of AIB or dispose of it in a sensible way. In any case, we propose that the State remains an important player in the banking sector.
- Working with the Central Bank, we will seek to promote greater competition in the banking sector.
- The rights of workers in the banking and financial sector must be respected. Any State-owned bank seeking to outsource or lay off workers must engage fully with trade union representatives and seek suitable agreements.

A better Credit Union sector

- We will immediately carry out a review of Credit Union regulations with the aim of reducing the red tape holding back individual Credit Unions and the wider movement from contributing more to our economy.
- Such a review would look at lending restrictions, savings caps and restrictions on the types of investments and services Credit Unions can offer, including what more it can do to help develop small businesses.
- We will prioritise engagement with the Credit Union sector and ensure its continued essential role in banking.

Dealing with Ireland's legacy debt

The Irish debt/GDP ratio is currently 99.7%. That means we owe debtors almost as much as every person and company in the state earns per year. In 2015, we spent €7.1 billion servicing interest on our debt. To put this in perspective, the total tax take for 2015 was €45.6 billion. That means for every €1 in tax paid, 16 cent went towards servicing interest payments.

Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour have repeatedly put the interest of banks before that of the economy, of society and of working families. €64 billion of taxpayers' money was poured into the banks, yet families in mortgage distress and struggling small businesses have been left to fend for themselves.

Commitments

A better approach to tackling debt

- We will reopen negotiations at European Union level on the State's legacy banking debt, including preventing the sale of the promissory note bonds currently held at the Central Bank.
- We will establish a committee to examine the issue of debt justice and advise the government on options and steps to achieve it for Ireland.
- We will apply for retrospective recapitalisation of AIB and Bank of Ireland through the European Stability Mechanism.
- We will stand up for Irish interests in the EU to secure debt justice for our State and others.



Part 3

Improved public services and quality of life

A plan for healthcare

Our health system is in a state of crisis. The current government, and Fianna Fáil before them, have presided over a two-tier, failing health service that leaves the elderly without dignity on hospital trolleys, patients waiting years for badly needed medical procedures, and children without the therapies required to walk, talk and reach their potential.

This crisis can be boiled down to two key failings on the part of successive governments: first, an extreme depth of fundamental inequality in how patients are treated, differentiated on ability to pay and location; and second, the incapacity of the system to deal with demographic pressures, evidenced particularly in our Emergency Departments and maternity care.

This is not acceptable. Inability to pay should not deny anyone the opportunity to lead a full, long, healthy life.

Having squandered five years in government, Fine Gael and Labour finally jettisoned their ill-advised plan for Universal Health Insurance and they have no alternative, no solution. Fianna Fáil plan to throw a little bit more money into the existing inefficient and unfair system, without reform. This would be throwing good money after bad.

Universal Health Care, not Universal Health Insurance, is the solution.

Sinn Féin has a costed and credible plan to deliver world class universal healthcare, as detailed in the recently published policy document ‘Better for Health’. By progressively replacing private spending by members of the public with public spending, allied with better stewarding of spending, we can achieve much greater efficiency and fairness. We can deliver more for the same.

In government we will implement this plan and will be joined by partners across the health system with which we share this most vital objective. The Irish people deserve nothing less.

Commitments

Begin move to fully free healthcare

- We will increase spending on healthcare by €3.3 billion to move from a failing, two-tier health system towards universal healthcare.
- We will roll out both free GP care at a rate of almost a quarter of a million more people each year and free prescription drugs for all.

- We will end two-tier access to hospital care, reduce waiting times and deal with the trolley crisis by increasing funding for acute hospitals.
- We will increase funding for Healthy Ireland by €200,000 and introduce a sugary drinks tax.
- We will establish an independent Patient Advocacy Agency and provide for an Ombudsman to take on individual cases of clinical negligence and adverse outcomes.
- We will maximise the potential of all-Ireland cooperation in the field of healthcare.
- We will increase funding to the Public Dental Service to allow it to deliver its remit in full and we will further extend the Universal Cycle of Dental Care and Service scheme.

Increasing Capacity

- We will recruit 6,600 additional frontline health workers, including consultants, nurses, midwives, dentists and allied health professionals.
- We will increase the number of hospital beds per 1,000 of the population from the current level of less than 4 to 4.6, with a view to further raising this ratio.
- We will increase nursing home beds by 3,800.
- We will increase home help hours and home care packages.
- We will tackle the crisis in maternity care by recruiting 621 additional midwives and 239 obstetricians/gynaecologists.

Prioritising mental healthcare

- We will increase the mental health budget.
- We will complete the rollout of Suicide Crisis Assessment Nurses (SCAN).
- We will recruit mental health nurses specifically to liaise with homeless services, commencing with 5 in year one.
- We will increase the number of inpatient child and adolescent beds to end the inappropriate admission of children to adult psychiatric units.
- We will increase provision for people with mental health difficulties and increase funding for counselling in primary care, which currently has long waiting lists.

Tackle immediate crises

- We will award an automatic medical card to every child with a serious illness or disability and tackle the poverty trap by introducing a new secure medical card for adults with disabilities, based on medical need.
- We will abolish the €100 charge for the use of Emergency Departments and the €75 per day charge for inpatient care.
- We will invest in our ambulance services, with an additional eight ambulances and 88 additional staff.
- We will prioritise disability services, including respite care and mental healthcare.

- We will support older people by increasing home help hours, respite hours and providing additional nursing home beds.
- We will legislate for a referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment in order to provide for a woman to seek a termination of a pregnancy where her life is at risk or in grave danger, and in cases of rape or incest as well as in cases of fatal foetal abnormalities.

Housing

Fine Gael and Labour have caused chaos in housing. They failed to invest in social and affordable housing, so there are now officially 89,872 households on local authority waiting lists. They failed to deal with rents in the private sector and caused rents to increase faster in 2015 than at any time during the boom. They failed to deal with exorbitant variable mortgage interest rates, pushing families into arrears. They facilitated the mass sell-off of properties by NAMA to international speculators and vulture funds. They failed to deal with the consequences of bad quality materials and dodgy building practices during the boom, leaving thousands of families in crisis. In Budget 2016, they allocated €17 million to tackle the emergency homeless crisis. In the same budget, they allocated €28 million to increase the amount in tax free gifts and inheritances.

Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour handed housing policy over to private developers. This policy has been a disaster. We now have a national emergency and we need a national response. Solving the housing crisis requires political will. Housing will be one of Sinn Féin's key priorities in government.

*Mortgages are dealt with in a separate section of this manifesto.

Commitments

Social and affordable housing

- We will launch plans for 2030 - Project 100,000 to bring the State ownership of housing stock to a minimum of 200,000. This will ensure a build of at least 70,000 social units and at least 30,000 cost purchase and cost rental housing units by 2030.
- We will commit €5 billion (a cumulative €2.2 billion more than the government's commitment) in capital spending in 2016-2021 and strengthen Part V to ensure the delivery of 36,500 social and affordable houses.
- We will increase requirements under Part V to 20% social and affordable housing on all new developments with 10% social and at least 10% affordable housing.

- We will ensure that all housing construction delivered by the State is designed in mixed tenure developments of social housing with differential rents, sheltered housing, cost rental and cost purchase, alongside good infrastructure and amenities.

Rents

- We will review all property-related tax reliefs that encourage speculation for profit.
- We will re-examine urgently the practice of capping rent subsidies – simultaneous to the introduction of rent regulations, to ensure rents demanded by landlords do not escalate to meet any increase in the rent cap.
- We will create rent certainty by linking rent increases to inflation.
- To provide greater security of tenure, we will amend the Residential Tenancy Act to restrict the grounds on which landlords can serve notices to quit.
- We will establish a Deposit Retention Scheme, authorising the PRTB to hold private tenancy deposits until the conclusion of a tenancy agreement.

Social, environmental supports & geographic supports

- We will end the practice of removing HAP recipients from housing waiting lists.
- We will extend the Warmer Homes Scheme to include window and door insulation and increase funding to the grant system.
- We will continue to allow and smooth the planning process for the building of houses in rural Ireland as primary residences, but ensure this is achieved where the building is sustainable.

Planning regulation & building quality

- We will establish an Office of Planning Regulator, with the appointment of a Regulator to be made following open public competition by an Independent Appointments Board.
- We will ensure all public areas are finished by developers by requiring lodgment of a realistic bond to cover the works.
- We will ensure that developers and/or builders who do not finish their developments to the required standard will be put on a shared LA list and barred from applying for planning permission for further housing developments.
- We will ensure that where developers are found to have knowingly put residents at risk in their dwellings through bad building practices, legal and financial proceedings will be brought against those developers and a ban put in place to prevent them from building future developments.

- We will include all homeowners whose houses have been built with the Mica Muscovite (weetabix) block and include them in any redress scheme – along with homeowners suffering with pyrite issues.

Homelessness, inclusivity and special needs

- We will make an additional €30 million available to LAs and homeless agencies to house the homeless in emergency accommodation in year one of government.
- We will frontload funding to Local Authorities with a good track record of drawing down funds and providing Traveller accommodation, with penalties for those who refuse to build needed Traveller accommodation.
- We will develop Universal Design and Lifetime Adaptability Guidelines so new buildings can accommodate people with disabilities and save on future adaptation costs.
- We will remove blocks on survivors seeking social housing if they are named on a mortgage with their former abuser, as laid out in Sinn Féin's Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2014.
- We will increase funding for domestic violence refuges by €5.45 million in year one of government.

Community safety and justice

Communities across this State have felt the serious impact of cutbacks to An Garda Síochána delivered by Fine Gael, Labour and Fianna Fáil since 2010. Garda numbers are down and 139 garda stations have been closed. Elderly people and families in rural communities in particular are living in fear. Morale in the force is at an all-time low, due to scandals arising from profound management failings and an abdication of responsibility for oversight by successive governments.

Our penal system also needs to be reformed. The latest available figures show it costs €68,959 per annum to imprison one person. Repeat offending is facilitated by a prison system that fails in its vital rehabilitative role to our society. Sentencing is inconsistent.

There is much work to do.

Commitments

Gardaí

- We will recruit 3,000 gardaí over our government term to restore An Garda Síochána force levels to 14,250, or pre-crisis levels.
- We will ensure that An Garda Síochána works in partnership with the PSNI on the new task force to tackle the cross border criminality that plagues communities.
- We will reverse the closure of garda stations – these closures have provided minimal ‘savings’ to the state of €556,000 per annum and are a shameful legacy of this government.
- We will empower the Policing Authority to oversee the implementation of recommendations from Garda Inspectorate reports over recent years, in partnership with the management of An Garda Síochána.
- We will strengthen the role of the Policing Authority and the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission in the oversight of An Garda Síochána.
- We will ensure gardaí are adequately skilled to protect and support vulnerable people – including work on child sexual exploitation, vulnerable adults, domestic violence, victims of trafficking and people with mental health issues.
- We will continue to challenge any inappropriate police behaviour and any failure of duty.
- We will legislate for increased powers and resources to be provided to Joint Policing Committees.

Justice system & sentencing

- We will establish a Criminal Justice Inspectorate based on the model in the North of Ireland that would be primarily responsible for the oversight and the effectiveness and efficiency of the workings of organisations within the criminal justice sector.
- We will establish – through the North South Ministerial Council – an all-island process to deal with the issue of support mechanisms for all of those who were victims of sexual abuse during the conflict.
- We will repeal the Offences Against the State Acts.
- We will introduce a Sentencing Council that issues sentencing guidelines to the judiciary to ensure accountability and consistency in sentencing.
- We will ensure the enactment of a Judicial Council Bill and implement our party’s Reform of Judicial Appointments Procedures Bill 2013 to ensure that judicial appointments are always based on merit rather than political affiliation and to ensure that the judiciary are representative of the diverse society that they serve.

- We will integrate restorative justice processes into the existing criminal justice system.
- We will introduce an enhanced remission scheme on an incentivised basis for certain categories of prisoners, aimed at genuine rehabilitation and reducing recidivism levels.
- We will invest the money seized by the Criminal Assets Bureau back to frontline services in the communities worst affected by crime.
- We will create a dedicated family courts system aimed at reducing the prolonged stress and cost to families of separation and divorce, backed up by legislation directing families to mediation services prior to entering legal proceedings.

Education

Fine Gael and Labour have seriously damaged education in Ireland. They have removed supports for children with special needs so they have less time with their Special Needs Assistants and Resource Teachers. They have increased student fees and removed many grant supports, forcing many third-level students to drop out and leave their courses. They cut funding to schools, which resulted in students being taught in overcrowded classrooms. Principals are finding it more and more difficult to cover the basic costs of running a school, including paying for light, heat and insurance. In many cases, parents have to make up the shortfall.

Teachers who cannot secure full-time employment are told to teach in JobBridge positions. Teaching principals are overworked and are only given minimal time to engage in the tasks required for running a school. Many teachers at third level are employed in low paid, insecure positions. Guidance counselling services in schools have been cut dramatically, leaving students from less well-off backgrounds at a major disadvantage. Huge numbers of children are regularly excluded from their local school on the basis of their religion. Yet the government continues to subsidise private schools with millions in taxpayers' money, further entrenching educational inequalities and a two-tier system. Moves are being made to progressively increase the role of corporate interests in third-level institutions.

Sinn Féin believes that education is a basic and fundamental human right and should be available to everyone on the basis of full equality and that academic freedom must be protected.

Commitments

Invest in Education

- We will shrink class sizes and gradually reduce the ratio of pupils to teachers from 27:1 to 20:1, beginning with a one point reduction in year one and a further point in year two. During these first two years we will conclude an analysis of the impact of continuing to reduce the PTR in terms of the need for additional classrooms and schools arising and introduce a capital programme to facilitate the further reduction of class sizes.
- We will allocate funding to commence the reduction of the Pupil Teacher Ratio in DEIS schools to 15:1, an objective on which may take a second term of government to deliver.
- We will increase the capitation rates for primary and secondary schools by 10% over the term of government and for Youthreach, VTOS and PLCs by 5%.
- We will increase teaching principal administration dates to one extra per month and reduce the threshold for acquiring an administrative principal from 178 to 145.
- We will defend small schools by reversing changes to the staffing schedule for schools with less than 85 pupils.
- We will reverse the cuts to guidance counselling and ensure at least one guidance counsellor per 500 pupils ex-quota.
- We will promote adult literacy by providing opportunities for 20,000 learners to participate in a course leading to a Level 3 or Junior Cert qualification.
- We will introduce 1,000 additional apprenticeship places for trainees.
- We will invest additional funds to tackle staffing shortages at third level, including Institutes of Technology.

Anti-discrimination

- We will end the laws that allow for religious discrimination against children in school admissions and we will support increased diversification of patronage.

Resource inclusive education

- We will increase resource-teaching hours for children by 15% and increase funding for SNA provision to facilitate greater access by children with special needs.
- We will increase the number of psychologists in NEPS by 10% and ensure cover for maternity and other forms of extended leave.
- We will extend funding supports for people with disabilities in higher education to part-time students to make education more accessible.
- We will introduce 500 additional places on the Momentum scheme for jobseekers with disabilities.

Reduce the costs of education

- We will increase funding to the school meals programme by 40% and the School Books Grant by 30%. We will also increase the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance by €50.
- We will increase the Back to Education Allowance for under 26s to €188.
- We will remove PLC fees and end the practice of requiring FAS apprentices to pay pro-rata student contributions.
- We will abolish student fees over a term of government by incrementally reducing the student contribution while replacing the revenue lost to the third level institutions through the central exchequer.
- We will introduce maintenance grants for postgraduate students and reverse the changes to the adjacent rate of grant so that greater numbers can avail of this support.
- We will introduce rules so that schools must have generic school uniform policies to reduce back-to-school costs for families.
- We will regulate the payment of voluntary contributions by parents so that they are truly voluntary and so that boards of management are accountable to parents.

Protect through education

- We will provide age-appropriate sexual violence, education and prevention programmes for primary and secondary schools.
- We will place school guidelines on anti-bullying and addressing diversity as well as guidelines on mental health and suicide awareness policies on a statutory footing, so that they are implemented across all schools to the same high standard.
- We will ensure every school has a defibrillator on site.

Pay and promotions

- Sinn Féin is opposed to two-tier pay scales. In future pay negotiations, we will prioritise public sector workers on low to middle incomes, work towards pay equalisation and tackle the casualisation of employment, including for newly qualified teachers.

Childcare

Sinn Féin sees childcare as a public service for both children and parents. When it works, a State's childcare system can be a huge employer; help with the health and mental development of our youngest children; facilitate parents, especially women, to access the workforce; and be a positive component of economic growth. This government, like the last, has paid lip-service to the area of childcare. Under its watch, the average cost of childcare in Ireland ranges between €800 and €1,100 per month for a single child, depending on location. Those who can avail of it do so at crippling costs and those who can't are forced to remove themselves from the labour market altogether, or rely on one income to sustain the family.

For employees in the system, childcare work is low-paid with little recognition of the skills involved or the dedication required. Rather than providing its maximum potential for employment, the sector faces a mass exodus as other areas of the economy recover and offer more in wages than the bare minimum.

Commitments

Affordability and helping parents

- We will extend maternity benefit by 6 weeks and allow that portion to be taken by either parent at the end of the current 26 weeks maternity leave.
- We will deliver 52 weeks of maternity or parental leave, to be achieved by increasing maternity benefit by 5 weeks in each of the subsequent years of government.
- We will increase the rate of maternity benefit paid to allow mothers to avail of their leave without financial hardship. We will increase it to €260 per week to begin with.
- We will cap maximum fees for childcare costs at €180 per week and move to €150 per week (€3.75 per hour) over the term of government. We will further reduce parents' fees in a second term of government.

Childcare workers' rights and qualifications

- We will aim for a 60% degree-led ECCE workforce by 2025, as recommended by the EU – i.e. that 60% of all supervisors, managers, etc, hold degrees.
- We will extend the Learner Fund to support progression to Level 7 and 8 qualifications. We will allocate a fund of €80 million over 5 years for this professionalisation.
- We will implement rights and standards for childcare workers and initiate progress towards contracts with professional salaries that provide for CPD planning and preparation.

Inclusivity

- We will provide an additional 1,000 SNAs to the ECCE Programme and additional needs training for all childcare employees working with children with special needs.

Quality and regulation

- We will increase capitation grants for the Free Pre-School Year by €5 per week to €67.50, and by €9.50 for the higher capitation rate to €82.50.
- We will open up the Community Childcare Scheme so that the funding follows the child, not the setting. We will extend the Community Childcare Subvention scheme by making subsidised places available in privately run early-years services.
- We will implement the immediate rollout of Síolta and Aistear through County Childcare Committees (CCCs).
- We will ensure consistency in reporting standards and cooperation between investigating services and care providers to ensure quality and standards can be achieved in provision.
- We will review supporting agencies to ensure that they are sufficiently funded and to eliminate any duplication of work.
- We will increase the number of Tusla inspectors by 30%.
- We will move to a person-centred, not service-centred approach to vetting, providing a time-limited passport-type document to ensure continued monitoring of individuals' suitability for working with children, but also to ease the burden of re-vetting for each new position.

The Environment

Sinn Féin is committed to reaching the State's renewable energy targets for 2020. The State has committed to generating 16% of its overall energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020. Sinn Féin will introduce measures to grow renewable energy production and to reduce Ireland's carbon emissions. This will require involvement from the State and at community level.

In addition, in this term of government, we want to address the issue of flood defences. Our capital expenditure commitment for water and flood investment is outlined in our jobs section.

Energy costs

- We will install a dedicated route to the national energy grid for community projects. We will ensure that all energy projects are subject to the Strategic Environment Assessment; that a Feed-in-Tariff is made available for Solar PV

electricity; and that a fair export tariff is given for electricity from micro-generation, with the carbon-offset contribution recognised.

- We will invest in retrofitting of housing as a means of carbon reduction and tackling fuel poverty. In the first instance this will mean extending the warmer homes scheme to windows and doors.
- We will oppose any further privatisation of state energy assets.

Sustainable energy

- We will keep Ireland free of fracking and nuclear power.
- We will bring the Sinn Féin Wind Turbine Regulation Bill 2014 to committee and remaining stages and introduce proper regulation of wind turbines.
- We will bring in staged tax measures on offshore oil and gas fields, as outlined by the report by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Natural Resources and Agriculture.
- We will engage with climate change experts to set specific targets and create a roadmap to reduce CO₂ emissions. We will then develop an interdepartmental strategy to meet carbon emissions reduction targets, and ensure there is innovation in the green economy, the provision of public transportation and so forth.

Flood defences

- We will regulate planning to prevent areas being built on or developed which are at risk of flooding, and we will ensure government investment in flood defences. All planning decisions will fully comply with EU directives on flood mapping to tackle high-risk areas.
- We will invest in our water and sewerage, drainage and coastal infrastructure.
- We will introduce measures to mitigate against climate change and its effects, including rising sea levels, storms, coastal flooding, etc.
- We will address the market failure of the insurance industry and political failure of the government through its lack of State intervention to provide affordable, capped insurance cover to domestic households and SME properties against high flood risk. This will involve looking at a Memorandum of Understanding between the government and the insurance industry (similar to Britain), operating within EU State Aid rules, which commits insurers to make flood insurance for high-risk elements available to domestic households and SME properties.
- We will establish a single Shannon River Authority to ensure that there is proper coordination of and a robust response from the various agencies responsible when flooding occurs and also that necessary steps are taken to minimise the risk of flooding in the future.

Building communities

Communities throughout the State depend heavily on publicly-supported initiatives and programmes. Sinn Féin is totally opposed to the privatisation of local community services, with the consequent risk not only to jobs and working conditions but to the services that have been provided to date.

Funding for the Local Community Development Programme has been slashed by over 40% since 2008. The overall community and voluntary sector is worth billions to the economy, employs tens of thousands of people, and encompasses around 7,500 charitable, community and voluntary groups, which provide essential services to children, older people, people with disabilities or ill health, drug users, women and Travellers.

We also see sport as having a vital role in developing communities and want to ensure that investment is made in recreational sport first and foremost at community level; and that all sporting bodies, particularly at professional level, are properly funded and governed.

Commitments

Funding security

- We will invest an additional €36 million in Local Community Development Programmes.
- We will introduce multi-annual minimum funding to enable community and voluntary organisations to plan ahead.
- We will introduce VAT refunds as outlined in the taxation section of this document.
- We will amend the Charities Act to provide for the recognition of human rights promotion as a charitable activity.

Community employment

- We will reshape and extend Community Employment to recognise it as a path to regular employment and also in recognition that community employment and services are ends in and of themselves.
- We will introduce practical supports through professional support staff, advice and guidance, alongside funding to recruit, induct, train and support volunteers.
- We will support collective bargaining for all community and voluntary sector workers who currently do not have the ability to negotiate their pay and conditions on a collective basis.
- We will fund the rollout of an area-based anti-poverty programme based on the Young Ballymun model. The programme will focus on prevention and early intervention strategies, working to improve outcomes in education,

health and mental health for all children, young people and families in areas with high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. The programme will start by identifying new pilot areas across the State, including continuing funding for Ballymun.

An all-island approach

- We will establish the All-Ireland Consultative Civic Forum to enable communities to learn from best practices being carried out elsewhere in the country and share information and ideas.
- Investment in sport
- We will invest an additional €42 million in sport at community level.

Working with people with disabilities

Fianna Fáil, followed in turn by Fine Gael and the Labour Party, all promised to protect and prioritise people with disabilities. In power, they did the opposite. The budget for Disability Services was drastically decreased, the Mobility Allowance scheme was closed, the annual Respite Care Grant was slashed by almost 20 per cent, and funding for the Housing Adaptation Grant was more than halved. Disability Allowance, Household Benefits Package and Fuel Allowance were all reduced. Educational supports, including Resource Teachers and SNAs, have been diminished. Medical cards were targeted and the mainstream public services upon which those with disabilities disproportionately depend were decimated.

The outcome of these austerity policies for people with disabilities and their families has been devastating. People with disabilities remain more than twice as likely to be unemployed compared to the typical population and just 15% of people with an intellectual disability are in employment. The CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions published in 2015 shows that 53% of people who are not in work due to disability or illness are experiencing enforced deprivation. They cannot afford the very basics such as heating their homes, putting food on the table and buying appropriate clothing.

Commitments

Accountability for implementing inclusion

- We will give the department of An Taoiseach specific responsibility for Disability Inclusion. This will ensure a named person with overarching responsibility for the advancement of the rights of people with disabilities sits at the Cabinet table and is party to all decisions affecting people with disabilities. Dedicated staff in the Department of An Taoiseach will be allocated responsibility for driving the cross-departmental National Disability Strategy Implementation Plans, with the Taoiseach accountable to the Oireachtas. We will also establish an Oireachtas Committee on Disability Inclusion.

The cost of disability

- We will begin to recognise the cost of disability by increasing Disability Allowance by €20.
- We will extend an automatic full medical card to every child qualifying for the Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) and introduce a secure medical card for people with disabilities, immune from changes to household finances or employment status. This is essential, otherwise the medical card system will continue to trap people with disabilities in unemployment and poverty.

Employment

- We will tackle further barriers to employment for people with disabilities by opening positive mainstream jobseeker supports to people with disabilities on a voluntary basis; increasing the capacity and promotion of specialist employment supports; securing and rolling out good practice models developed by projects such as WALK PEER and the Integrated Employment and Mental Health Support pilot project; and introducing a new facility for claimants to voluntarily suspend for a time their claim for Disability Allowance if they enter into or increase their employment, without having to make a fresh claim from scratch if they become unable to work once again.

Healthcare

- We will increase investment in disability specific services, personal assistant hours and respite care services, as provided for in Sinn Féin's Health Policy.

Education

- We will deliver further on the EPSEN Act 2004 prioritising entitlement to an Individual Education Plan with associated resources for every child with a disability. To this end, we will increase funding for the provision of resource teachers, SNAs, educational psychology provision and equipment.

- We will extend supports to students with disabilities in part-time education currently available only to those in full-time education.

Housing

- We will make such funding as the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with Disabilities payable to voluntary housing agencies and private landlords who are willing to adapt to the requirements of a long-term tenant.
- We will allow tenants of Local Authorities to claim the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with Disabilities.
- We will develop Universal Design and Lifetime Adaptability Guidelines so new buildings can accommodate people with disabilities and save on future adaptation costs.
- We will introduce national standards for support for housing adaptation. The costs of this should be examined and increased incrementally after consultation with the Disability Federation of Ireland, CIF and other stakeholders.
- We will develop All-Ireland strategies for accommodation for people with intellectual disabilities and for people who experience mental illness.
- We will fully integrate supported housing into the community for people with intellectual disabilities and for people who experience mental illness and increase sheltered accommodation schemes.

Transport

- We will introduce a scheme to refund VRT/VAT for taxi drivers who purchase a wheelchair accessible vehicle, with a clawback provision should they cease to operate within a certain timeframe. This scheme will support the purchase of 1,000 wheelchair-accessible taxis, which would double the current number and bring us to almost 10% of all public-service vehicle licences.
- We will roll out Access Ireland Transport – a major infrastructure programme to make all public transport services fully wheelchair accessible. We will invest a total of €187 million to replace non-wheelchair accessible vehicles in Bus Éireann subsidised service, construct wheelchair accessible bus stops, and undertake accessibility works to bus stations, railway stations and the train fleet over the term of government.



Part 4

Rural Ireland

Addressing the imbalance

Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Labour have long since abandoned rural Ireland. It received little investment during the boom to redress the imbalance of failed policies, and the subsequent austerity policies have all but devastated rural counties. Cuts have hit communities, families, public services and the local economy. Austerity has taken away the opportunity for people to live and work in rural Ireland and has forced a generation to emigrate.

Local communities have been disempowered. Infrastructure has deteriorated as a result of severe cuts to regional and local budgets – affecting roads, broadband delivery and, most noticeably in recent times, flood protection. Garda stations have been closed. These closures, which have saved little money, have left elderly people in particular living in fear.

The creation of jobs has been impeded by a number of factors but particularly by the poor quality of infrastructure and a lack of focus by the enterprise development agencies.

Sinn Féin wants to make rural Ireland a sustainable place to live and work, where the quality of life is matched by the quality of public services; a place where young educated graduates have the opportunity to stay and build their future and a place that welcomes back emigrants, including those forced to leave over recent years.

The measures outlined below are just a small section of what we've outlined in detail in our more comprehensive policies on rural Ireland, particularly the most recent West of Ireland document, which also includes proposals for the islands.

Commitments

Rural equality

- We will introduce a Rural Equality Bill to provide for carrying out rural impact assessments where measures affect rural areas. In simple terms, all legislation and regulation will be rural-proofed under Sinn Féin, ending discrimination against rural areas.

Open for business

- We will develop a new enterprise spatial strategy in order to orientate infrastructural development and IDA and Enterprise Ireland development in a balanced regional manner
- We will create a new arm of Enterprise Ireland to assist with the development a new generation of cooperative enterprises.

- We are committed to keeping open post offices, libraries, garda stations and other services that connect people with their local towns.
- We will guarantee that the Exchequer will make up the shortfall in cuts to leader funding from EU level. We will end the government's power-grab for LEADER and community development programmes, thus protecting community control and the bottom-up ethos in the rollout of these programmes. We will increase coordination between all programmes and agencies tasked with rural diversification and economic development.

Broadband, communications & IT

- We will make the West the e-commerce focal point of Ireland and provide financial stimulus to build a new generation of micro enterprises and co-ops in rural communities, to be operated in a similar manner to the current High Potential Start Up support scheme run by Enterprise Ireland.
- We will oversee the replacement of copper with fibre optic cable and the provision of industrial cable broadband to municipal towns. We will strive to ensure all householders and businesses have access to a minimum speed of 100Mbps
- We will create a digital hub in Galway City through the provision of sufficient broadband levels and IDA/government incentives. This hub will become an economic driver in the West and could contribute to rebalancing economic regional development.
- We will ensure that mobile phone companies' licences include conditions around the provision of coverage, particularly in rural areas, and that future spectrum licences should be based on geographic coverage instead of percentage coverage.

Rural resettlement & emigration

- We will introduce a pilot scheme for rural resettlement. This will provide a relocation package of up €5,000, including return flights for qualifying emigrant families to return to rural Ireland.
- We will facilitate and support those returning to care for elderly relatives, implementing changes to the habitual residence clause.

Transport & infrastructure

- We will ensure that in rural areas with declining population profitability is not the key consideration regarding investment in transport infrastructure.
- We will increase funding for the rural transport programme and provide a funding package for improving the condition of rural roads.
- We will support the development of Ireland West Airport Knock as a strategically important international gateway to the region through the continued growth of the airport.

- We will restore funding to local authorities for the LIS community involvement scheme for non-council roads.

Energy

- We will ensure proper regulation of all aspects of wind turbine construction. This includes proper zoning of areas for wind turbine developments, the duties of planning authorities, setback distances and the responsibility for decommissioning wind turbines.
- We will ensure the retention of domestic turbary rights for families in the West of Ireland who cut turf to heat the family home, as has been part of Irish tradition and heritage for centuries.
- We will introduce a full legislative ban on fracking.

A good deal for fishing and coastal communities

The natural resources of Ireland belong to the people of Ireland. Our waters and our fish stocks are some of our most valuable strategic resources, however years of neglect and mismanagement by successive governments have thwarted the potential for a vibrant, sustainable and valuable fishing industry.

European regulations, rigidly and enthusiastically enforced by successive Irish governments, have hurt fishermen, held back our fishing industry and hampered economic growth in coastal communities.

Sinn Féin is determined to support a rejuvenated fishing industry that is environmentally sustainable and economically viable. Such an industry could act as an engine for growth and employment in communities up and down our coast, delivering a fair recovery for this neglected sector.

Commitments

Charter of Rights

- We will implement a Charter of Rights for the Fishing Industry, setting out the responsibilities of both government and those involved in fishing.
- We will repeal the penalty point system currently in place, which criminalises fishermen and devalues their business.
- We will reform fisheries management by making fisheries management structures more democratic and by involving fishermen in the collection of independently verifiable scientific data.
- We will introduce a sectoral work permit scheme especially for fisheries to ensure that

the recruitment of non-EU workers is regulated and that they are afforded the same protections as EU workers.

- We will facilitate island cooperatives and development companies in buying fishing licences and/or polyvalent ‘tonnage’, which could be leased out to island fishermen who wish to enter the industry or to expand their fishing operations.

Fighting in Europe for better conditions for Irish fishing

- We will fight for adequate quotas and ensure their fairer distribution amongst Irish fishermen.
- We will oppose further cuts to the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, which exists to give financial assistance to coastal communities and the fishing industry.
- We will pursue at a European level restrictions on factory vessels and super-trawlers in Irish waters.
- We will negotiate a reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and related legislation to simplify regulations and put an added emphasis on development in coastal communities.
- We will negotiate an increase in draw-down of EU Funds to support the Irish fishing industry through:
 - provision for a Single Boat Payment under a reformed Common Fisheries Policy;
 - investment in Naval Surveillance to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by foreign vessels; and
 - investment in health and safety schemes for fishermen.

Innovative methods

- We will pursue innovation, diversification and investment in the fisheries sector to:
 - support research and development in fisheries and seafood production, in coastal tourism, and in renewable maritime energy;
 - promote Ireland as a key hub for fish processing;
 - examine investment in hatcheries and spawning beds to facilitate restocking native fish species; and
 - explore capacity for blue growth along the Irish coast.
- We will develop an environmentally sustainable cooperative-based aquaculture industry that takes into account international best practice and the Kunterra model in particular.
- We will address the inland fisheries conservation practices that have led to dwindling stocks and mass fish kills.

Fairness for farmers

The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has provided great support for farmers. Unfortunately, many of its measures and how they are interpreted by Department officials in Ireland has made accessing CAP payments and adhering to programmes unnecessarily troublesome to farmers, particularly with regard to onsite inspections.

It is possible to introduce a system that ensures that our environment is protected and that consumers can continue to have full confidence in our produce without an excess of bureaucracy.

We have been calling for CAP simplification and particularly less burdensome site inspections involving longer periods of notice, introduction of a yellow card system, immediate reports of breaches and more proportionate penalties. Inspections must be carried out in a mutually respectful manner, aimed at improving farming methods and increasing compliance, not just at penalising farmers at every turn.

In June 2014, following a period of intensive consultation with farming stakeholders, Minister Michelle O'Neill outlined how the new Common Agriculture Policy will look for farmers in the North. In the new CAP, Minister O'Neill fought hard to ensure a more equitable and fair allocation of single farm payments. The successfully negotiated changes will see a short transition period of seven years towards flat rate payments. This will tackle years of imbalance, which particularly impacted on our hill farmers.

Minister O'Neill also brought forward a £250 million Farm Business Improvement Scheme and a Young Farmers' Scheme to provide a financial incentive for our younger farmers, helping them make necessary adjustments and improvements to their farms. These decisions form part of the minister's 'Going For Growth' strategy, which aims to create 15,000 new agri-food jobs, as well as growing exports and sales 60% by 2020.

This is what can be achieved with a Sinn Féin minister in charge.

Commitments

Farming rights

- We will implement the Charter of Rights for Farmers and will implement them so that direct payments and farm schemes can be delivered to farmers efficiently and speedily, with the minimum bureaucracy and in a spirit of constructive cooperation between farmers, farm organisations and the organs of the state.
- The new Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) is taking money from the most vulnerable farmers, particularly in the West, by demanding clawbacks and imposing penalties. One-third of farmers who received reductions have appealed the Department's decision and to date 45% of these appeals have been fully or partially successful. We are calling for an amnesty (for those who made claims in good faith) for retrospective penalties levied on LPIS overclaims and for refunds to be issued immediately.
- We will establish a €12 million compensation fund for Hen Harrier designated conservation lands.
- We are committed to the principles of food sovereignty, which in the case of Ireland means no GMO, no hormones in beef and the survival of the family farm as we know it. It also includes the maintenance of our agri-food industry under Irish control and with ecological standards that we now regard as the norm, but which, in fact, are unique within the industrialised world. We will encourage more Irish food producers and farmers to apply for EU certification schemes such as PDOs (protected designations of origin), PGIs (protected geographical indications) and TSIs (traditional speciality indications) to promote and protect special and artisan local brands.
- We will maintain the concept of income averaging for taxation purposes to compensate farmers for extreme income volatility.

Less bureaucracy

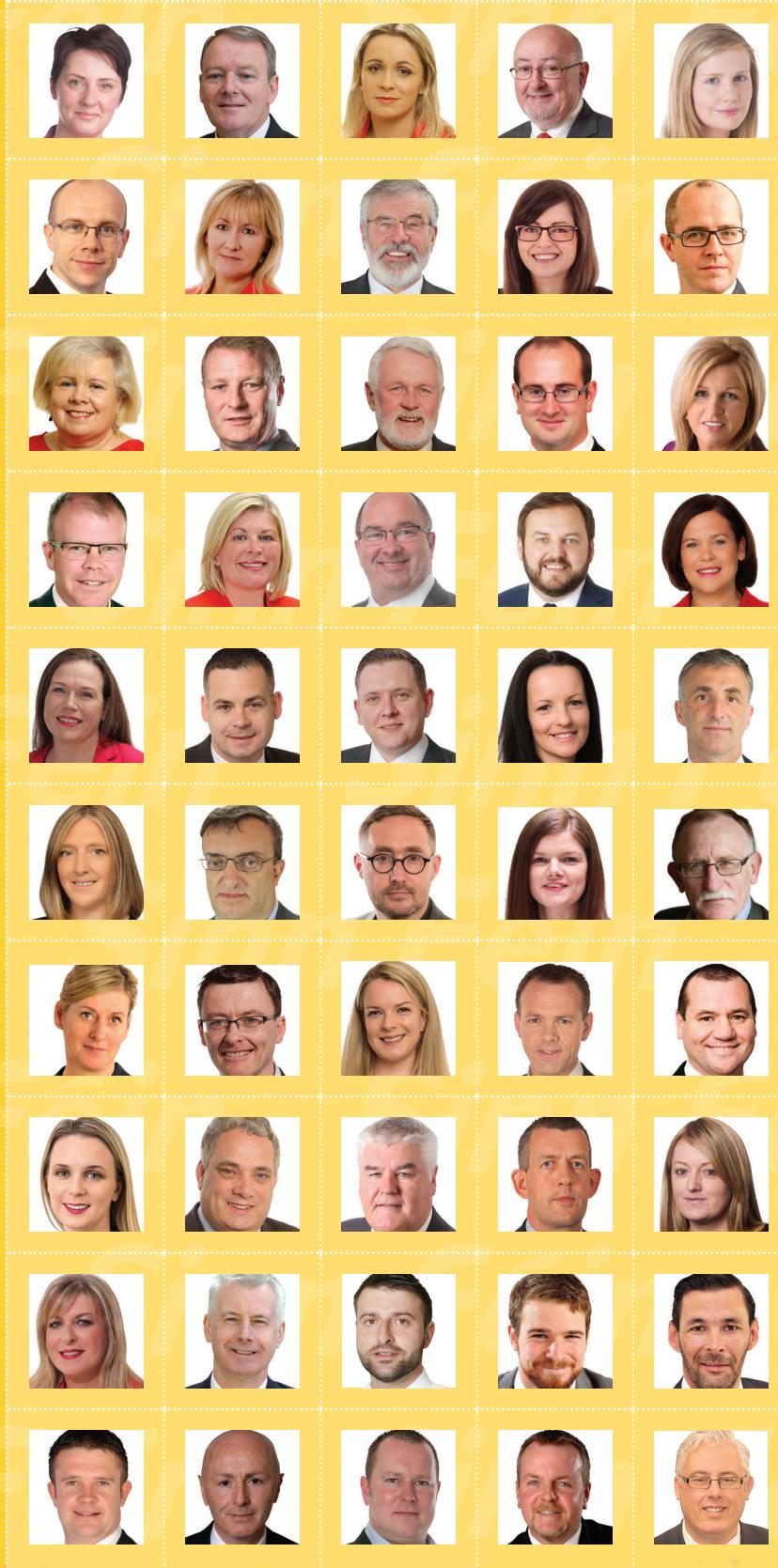
- We will work for the simplification of the Beef Data Genomics Programme to encourage wider uptake. We will instigate another round of applications to ensure full use of the fund allocated for this scheme.
- We will publish clear guidelines for farmers applying for Areas of Natural Constraint payments to avoid the lengthy waiting period thousands of farmers endured in 2015.
- We will set up an effective communication system for farmers to contact the department to enquire about the status of their applications so that those in need are not left in the dark.

TTIP

- We will continue to oppose the current Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the free trade and investment treaty being negotiated between the EU and the USA. TTIP is a bad deal for Irish agriculture as well as for consumers, citizens and workers. The Copenhagen Economics Report commissioned by the Irish government has warned that the State's beef sector is expected to contract by between one and three percent, equivalent to €25 million-€45 million, as a result of TTIP. Agricultural protection and rural proofing must be a red line issue in the ongoing EU-US trade negotiations.

Price assurances & income

- We will restore €5 million of Farm Assist – this measure reduces the assessment of means from self-employment, including farming, to 85% and reinstates the deductions from income in respect of children that were discontinued in 2013.
- We will create an additional 500 places on the Rural Social Scheme, expanding the current number of scheme places by 20%.
- We support an increased short-term intervention price for milk and other safety net measures to protect smaller dairy farmers facing price volatility since quota abolition.
- We will introduce legislation to oversee and regulate pricing, introducing transparency, including daily reporting of prices paid by processors to farmers and prices paid by retailers to processors and its comparison with retail prices paid by consumers.
- We will establish an all-island agri-food label for Irish produce. New EU labelling regulation, in force since April 2015, demands that the country of origin must be on the label of all foodstuffs. The partition of Ireland creates an anomalous situation whereby an animal reared in the North and slaughtered in the South must be labelled as “mixed origin”, that is, British beef slaughtered in Ireland. The reputation of Irish meat, whether beef, lamb or pork, is second to none; foreign buyers do not want a label which indicates “mixed” origin. Sinn Féin has called on the EU Commission to introduce measures to develop an all-island label and other measures to ensure a more integrated agricultural sector in Ireland.
- We will reintroduce the Groceries Order with immediate effect to combat below-cost selling of products and return to fair prices for producers and fair competition between mega supermarkets and smaller independent retailers. The repeal of the Groceries Order in 2005 enabled large supermarket chains to lower prices on certain high-profile items to be used as loss leaders to attract customers. This has sent many smaller retailers to the wall while dramatically driving farm gate prices down for farmers.



RIGHT
2
CHANGE